

DISTRO

082412 #54

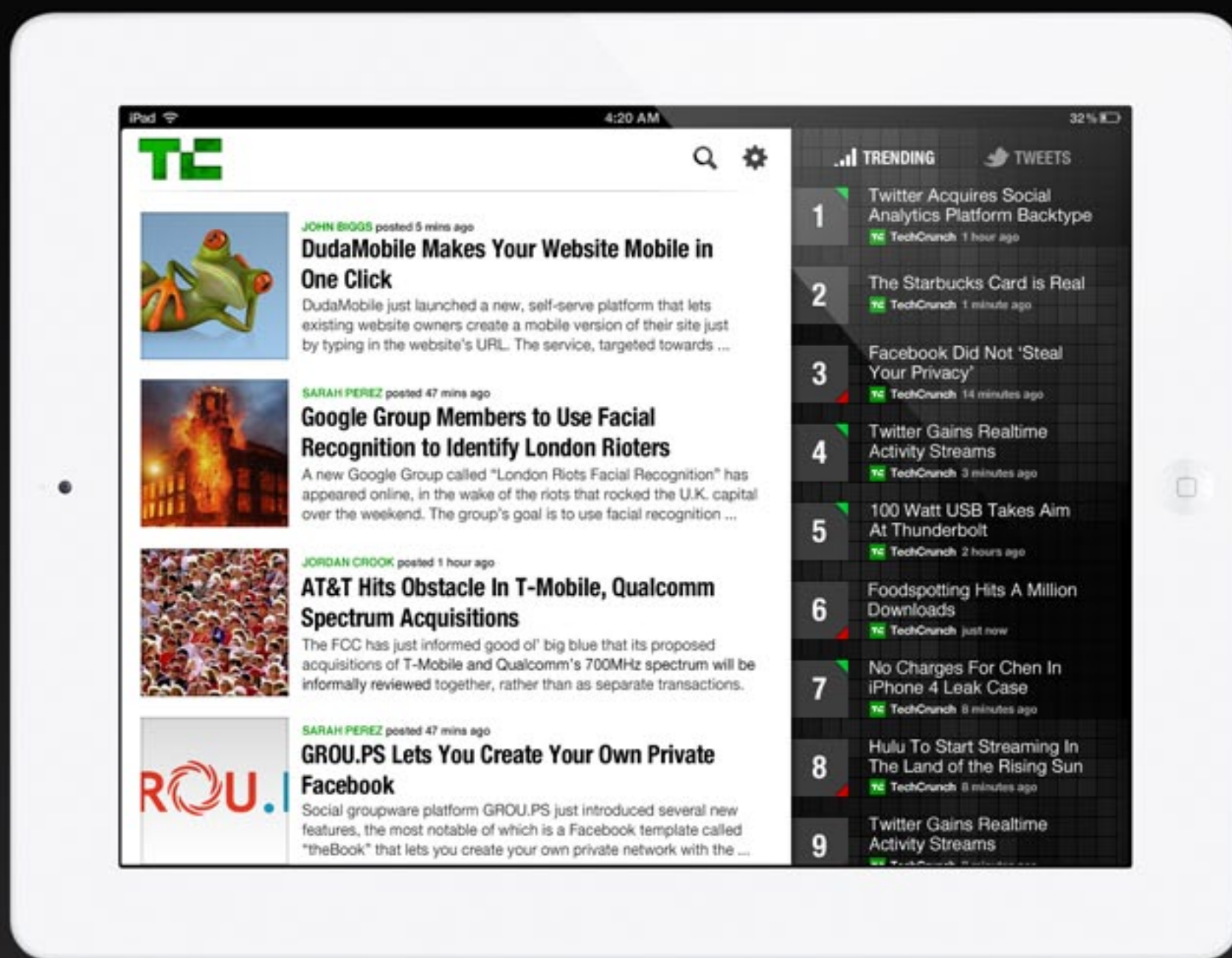
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ISSUE 54

DISTRO

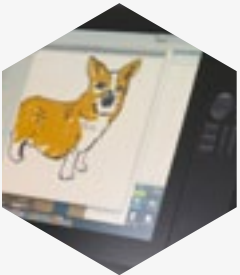
08.24.12

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REC READING
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FEATURE

2012 BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDE

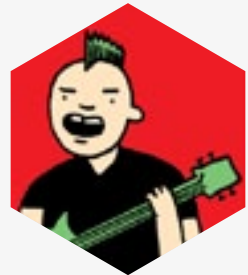
Forget the erasers and glue sticks. Here's the gear to keep school cool this year.

ACCESSORIES
BAGS AND CASES
DIGITAL CAMERAS
DOCKS AND CLOCKS
E-READERS
FUN STUFF
GAMING
HDTV
LAPTOPS
PORTABLE AUDIO
PRINTERS
SMARTPHONES
TABLETS
ULTRAPORTABLES

ESC



VISUALIZED
Mars on Earth



REHASHED
**More from the
Courtroom,
Instagram on
a Camera and
Microsoft's
New Logo**



TIME MACHINES
**A
Remembrance
of Things
Passed**

On the Cover:
Illustration by Harry Campbell



IN THE JURY'S HANDS

DISTRO
08.24.12



EDITOR'S
LETTER

August is rapidly drawing to a close, and you have to admit it's been a bit of a slow month in the grand scheme of tech news. But, that's all set to change in the coming weeks, with what is shaping up to be an absolutely insane September. I personally will be covering events in New York, San Francisco, Paris and Tokyo next month while the rest of the Engadget crew will be jetting around even more. So, get ready.

For now, though, the biggest news this week was the conclusion of arguments in the Samsung vs. Apple trial. The lawyers have had their say and now it's all up to the jury — a poor, poor jury that had to sit through 109 pages of instructions before being allowed to start pondering a verdict, instructions that took Judge Koh more than two hours to dictate! Now jurors are left with a 20-page form upon which their verdict will be inscribed. On the fun scale it sounds somewhere between consolidating 401(k) accounts and filing taxes, but with billions of dollars at stake, these are not forms that can be filled out lightly.

Lots of folks were surprised that the two companies let things go this far, that they'd even *think* of letting a

case of this magnitude be decided by a surely exhausted and likely befuddled jury. At Judge Koh's behest there was indeed a last-minute attempt for the two to come to terms, but seemingly nothing came of that. There's still time for a settlement between the two, but a happy resolution for both parties now seems mighty, mighty unlikely.

Regardless of the outcome here, Samsung's ramping up for what it expects will be strong demand for its semiconductors. The company is pouring four billion dollars into its Austin, Texas facility, improving and expanding the place. Presumably a good chunk of the silicon that will be slinging out the doors is destined for Apple devices, which makes this lawsuit all the more whimsical.

The Curiosity rover had a busy week on the Martian surface. While the humanoid crew on terra firma plotted a course for our six-wheeled friend, Curiosity took the opportunity to fire its head-mounted laser at a poor, unsuspecting rock. It lashed out with 30 pulses of a million watts each, instantly turning the rock's surface to plasma and making a nation of school kids (and tech bloggers) say, "Whoa, cool."



It's not all good news for Curiosity, however, which ran a full system report and identified a wonky wind sensor. The system was apparently damaged at some point during the landing and, while it isn't exactly a crucial system, it could hinder the research team's ability to detect wind speed from certain directions.

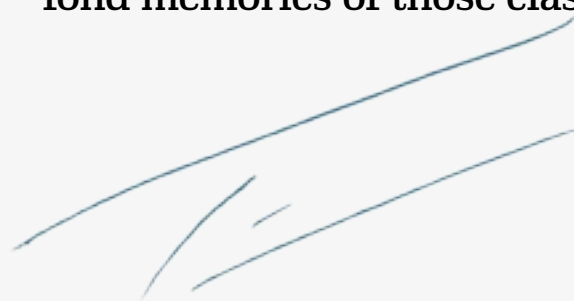
Back on Earth, Barnes & Noble saw a sharp improvement in its earnings this quarter, raking in \$1.5 billion in revenue and whittling its losses down to \$41 million. Obviously that's not as good as turning a profit, but nice progress from the \$57 million loss this time last year. The reason for the improvement? Huge sales for the Nook line? Massive up-take in e-book purchases? Well, Nook sales were flat and, while e-book sales were indeed up, this boost is mostly due to overwhelming sales of *50 Shades of Gray*, both in print and digitally distributed. Yeah, it's not just your mom.

Hilarious web comic destination *The Oatmeal* launched "Operation Lets Build a Goddamn Tesla Museum" on Indiegogo and, in less than a week, achieved its \$850,000 goal. From there, a matching New York State grant will enable the non-profit Tesla Science Center to purchase the site of the man's former labs in Shoreham, New York. There's still a long way to go before actual construction on a museum can begin — and plenty of time for Edison's descendants to try and undermine the whole thing.

Finally, and sadly, it's become apparent that the next issue of *Nintendo*

Power will be the last. Like many other children of the '80s, I wore the bindings out of every issue of *Nintendo Power* nearly as soon as it arrived. Without the help of those issues, often blessed with awful covers, I'd have never found my way through the Lost Woods in *The Legend of Zelda*, never learned optimal driving lines in *R.C. Pro-Am* and never developed the innate affinity for Nintendo characters that still sees me buying nearly every recycled Mario game the company churns out. Nintendo hasn't owned the magazine since 2007, when it entered a contract with Future US to take over publishing duties. Now, after 24 years, that agreement is ending and Nintendo doesn't look to be picking it up again. I know I'll be treating my back issues a little more carefully from now on.

We're going strong here and this issue of Distro brings our Back to School Guide right to your face, in which we curate the ultimate gadget selections for those heading to class. Even if your diploma has been yellowing on the wall for decades I hope you'll enjoy this look at our top pics in a variety of gadget categories. If not, well, we still have Eyes- and Hands-On sections, Recommended Reading and lots more good stuff. May it all prepare you for the classes to come — or bring back some fond memories of those classes that were.



TIM STEVENS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,
ENGADGET



ENTER

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EYES-ON

WACOM CINTIQ 24HD TOUCH

FINGER PRINTS

Trust us, you'll want to touch this 24-inch display while cranking out your next branding project. Touting 1.07 billion colors while handling 97% of Adobe's RGB gamut, the 24HD touch tacks on RGB backlighting for even better color rendition. This is, of course, just underneath the panel's surface that's primed for your workflow's finger swipes.

THE DAMAGE:
\$3,699

Tap for detail

COMMAND
CENTER

GAIN
PERSPECTIVE



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ENTER

HANDS-ON



Click on
product
names to
read full
stories

PRICING:
\$80-\$250

AVAILABILITY:
SEPTEMBER

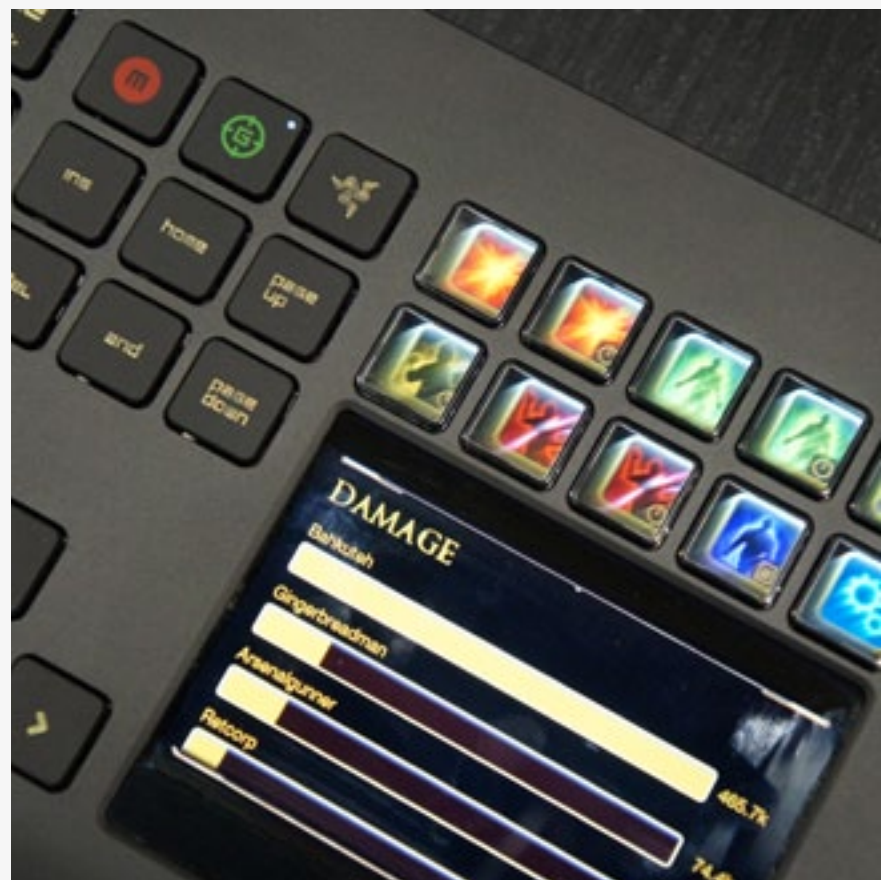
THE BREAKDOWN:
SWITCHBLADE UI AND
SIDESCREEN FUNCTIONALITY
MAKE THE ULTIMATE A SOLID
ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRICEY
LAPTOP.

RAZER DEATHSTALKER KEYBOARD

Ready to accompany the accessory maker's Ouroboros gaming mouse, the Deathstalker will arrive in Ultimate and Standard versions. They both plump for chiclet-style keys and the pricier (and larger) Ultimate felt both light and slim. The Standard issue packs three backlit color options, while the bigger board adds in Razer's light-up Switchblade UI, seen on its first gaming laptop. The first part of this is 10 LCD keys that can be customized to gaming buttons or more typical PC use. Beneath that, a touchpanel LCD can act as a trackpad and accepts several gesture motions. The keyboard will also feature Synapse 2, Razer's new cloud-based settings service.

We're liking these style lines, and it all follows the same design and sentiment of the Razer Blade. While the chiclets may not be to everyone's tastes, the keys on the Ultimate version felt responsive enough during our brief play, and the LCD keys still have the same optical effect found on the Blade, meaning the image seems to float on top of them.

We still need more PC titles to offer up their own customizations, but users will soon be able to take matters into their own hands, as Razer has launched the SDK for its Switchblade UI alongside this new keyboard.





PRICE:
TBD

AVAILABILITY:
DECEMBER

THE BREAKDOWN:
WE'VE BEEN AWAITING THE
IPHONE POWER-GRID SINCE
MARCH, AND THE ANDROID
FLAVOR ISN'T FAR BEHIND.

ROCCAT POWER-GRID APP

ROCCAT's plans to fight back against Razer's glowing customizable macro-keys and touchscreens are nearing the finish line. At Gamescom, the mouse and keyboard maker's Power-Grip app was at a nearly finished stage on the iPhone. Better still, the Android version was close behind it — although it was slightly less polished. The idea is to add a wealth of touchscreen widgets and quickly viewable data to your smartphone, sidestepping the need for pricier hardware solutions. That said, there are plans for ROCCAT to create some happy medium between the rogue smartphone interface and its more standard keyboard, with ideas gravitating towards a docking space for your phone built into the keyboard.



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HANDS-ON




PRICE:
\$70-\$300

AVAILABILITY:
FALL 2012

THE BREAKDOWN:
TURTLE BEACH HAS AN ARSENAL
OF AUDIO GEAR PLANNED FOR
BLACK OPS II, FROM HIGH-END
CANS TO EARBUDS.

TURTLE BEACH BLACK OPS II GAMING HEADSETS

Turtle Beach finally showed off its range of companion gaming headphones with some heavy-duty audio customization options in tow. While these were still developmental models, it should give you a good idea how the headphones will appear when they arrive in the next few months. Starting with the bank-busting Ear Force Tango headset (\$300), these connect to both the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 through Bluetooth, with wireless Dolby Surround Sound. The Tango's dual-band WiFi radio runs on its own rechargeable battery for up to 10 hours — and from our brief time with them, they're plenty comfortable too.

Next up, the Ear Force Sierra, which is again pitched towards pro-gamers. It's another Dolby Surround Sound headset, but this time it can be hooked up to a new controller that offers programmable presets. Turtle Beach told us that they worked directly with the *Call of Duty* creators to create these audio presets and it includes the ability to disguise your commands with voice morphing, all for \$280. If that's still a bit out of reach, the Ear Force Kilo come in at 80 bucks, and give you the same taste of *Call of Duty* branding. Turtle Beach's final offering was the Ear Force Earbuds, which pack an in-line mic and hardy fabric cabling to avoid tangles for \$70. 





Click on
headlines
to read full
stories

A Vision for the Future of Newspapers — 20 Years Ago

By Mark Potts, *Recovering Journalist*

Here, Mark Potts looks back at a memo (made public for the first time) that *Washington Post* managing editor Robert G. Kaiser sent to the paper's top executives after attending a conference on the future of digital media. Incidentally, a conference the former Apple CEO John Sculley invited him to. It's a fascinating document, looking with wonder at the rate of technological advancement and with concern at the challenges that old media would soon face. In Kaiser's words, "The *Post* ought to be in the forefront of this — not for the adventure, but for important defensive purposes." What's more, Potts has revealed some of the early work he did on the paper's digital products — an effort that began with the "PostCard" HyperCard project designed on his Macintosh LC at home.



A Beautiful Mind

By Bianca Bosker
Huffington Post

Sebastian Thrun may not be quite as well-known as some other Google executives, but that's slowly been changing as of late with his involvement in two of the company's highest-profile (yet secretive) initiatives: Project Glass and its self-driving cars. Bianca Bosker recently caught up with Thrun for this profile of his life and work, which also includes some ambitious projects outside of Google.

How Did Howard Rheingold Get So "Net Smart": An Interview

By Henry Jenkins
Confessions of an Aca-Fan

Howard Rheingold has given a number of interviews following the release of his latest book, but this one with Henry Jenkins may well be the most extensive. Divided into three parts, it touches on a range of issues discussed in the book, which Jenkins himself recommends you read before diving into the article. Those not quite ready to commit to that should still find plenty of interest here, though — and likely plenty of reasons to pick up the book after all.

When Machines Speak

By Ben Fino-Radin
Rhizome

You'll need to be in New York City to see the device for yourself, but this piece from *Rhizome* on the VODER (short for Voice Operation DEMonstratoR, and now on display as part of the "Ghosts in the Machine" exhibit at The New Museum) provides a great look at the first human speech synthesizer all on its own — an invention whose legacy is more evident today than ever, over 70 years after its debut.



BACK TO 2012 SCHOOL

GUIDE



ACCESSORIES
BAGS AND CASES
DIGITAL CAMERAS
DOCKS AND CLOCKS
e-READERS

Fun Stuff

GAMING
HDTV
LAPTOPS
PORTABLE AUDIO
PRINTERS
SMART PHONES
TABLETS
ULTRA PORTABLES



ACCESSORIES



You may need ultraportables and such to get the bulk of your work done, but you also need a few add-ons to make tasks just a bit easier. From extra batteries to external hard drives and peripherals, it's the little things that'll help you get through a worry-free day of back-to-back classes.

By Billy Steele



ACCESSORIES

On the Cheap

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SKOOBA DESIGN CABLE STABLE DLX



If you're like us, wrangling a bunch of cables each time you pack your rucksack is a regular occurrence. The Cable Stable DLX offers some relief here and has served a number of the folks at Engadget HQ well for quite some time. Compartments that can adjust to fit your mobile kit are available on one side, while the other can accommodate a tablet should the need arise.

KEY SPECS: 15 flexible spots for cables and gadgets, mesh pockets, elastic tie-downs, zippered outside storage.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

IRIG MIC CAST

You won't find studio-quality recording here, but the iRig MIC Cast will come in handy for recording lectures and interviews with your iOS device. Expect audio that's a step above the built-in mic on your handset or slate.



SAMSUNG I515 CHARGING SYSTEM

You may have a bit of trouble putting the Galaxy Nexus' un-skinned Jelly Bean goods down. Here, you'll gain an extra battery and a contraption that'll charge your phone and the spare at the same time, so be sure to get the extra Y-cable.



ACCESSORIES

Mid-Range

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BUY
\$169

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...



BUY
\$89+

G-TECHNOLOGY G-DRIVE MOBILE

Let's be honest, a backup is always a good thing to have — even when you're on the go. With capacities up to 1TB the G-Drive Mobile is capable of maintaining your "Plan B" while also securing your work files.



BUY
\$100

TOMTOM NIKE+ SPORT WATCH

If you're looking to fend off the freshman fifteen, this fitness wearable will lend a hand. The unit packs a GPS radio that works alongside shoe sensors to track distance and other stats with Nike+ software. Thanks to a recent update, the watch now features NikeFuel for comparing your performance with your mates.

KEY SPECS: TomTom-powered GPS, Nike+, fitness tracker, personal coach, Mac and Windows compatibility and NikeFuel.

ICADE IPAD ARCADE CABINET

You can't use that Apple slate as a legit study tool *all* the time. For those pauses, snag the iCade iPad arcade cabinet for a bit of retro gaming right on your tablet, powered by two AA batteries.



ACCESSORIES

Money's No Object

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WD MYBOOK THUNDERBOLT DUO

While this Thunderbolt storage option is quite pricey, it does tout a list of specs that will soften the blow a bit. Available in both 4TB (2x 2TB) and 6TB (2x 3TB) varieties, these MyBooks can be daisy-chained together to form quite the backup solution for all of those precious libraries of data. And of course, 700 MB/s read speeds in RAID 0 will require little wait.

KEY SPECS: Thunderbolt connectivity, 4TB and 6TB options, 700 MB/s reads alongside 500 MB/s writes and user-swappable drives.



BUY
\$485

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

VERIZON JETPACK 4620

The up-front cost of one of these isn't substantial, but when you tack on the two-year agreement, the grand total will add up. However, if you're finishing that term paper and the power goes out, this compact hotspot will keep you connected.



BUY
\$50



BUY
\$300

WACOM INTUOS5 TOUCH

For those looking to spice up their photography or design-related workflow, these make a nice grab. Available in three sizes, the Intuos5 touch models sport nifty, customizable swipe gestures with top-notch pen input that you'd expect from Wacom.



BAGS AND CASES

With all those gadgets and textbooks competing for space in your backpack, a little organization is key. This collection of bags, sacks and cases will let you spend less time rummaging for gizmos and more time exploring your campus.
By Joe Pollicino



CRUMPLER LOCAL IDENTITY W/ HAVEN CAMERA POUCH

BUY
\$180

Crumpler's Local Identity has served as this editor's event bag since CES. A bike messenger-style folding top allows it to expand for larger cargo, while the inside can be split as a top and a (sling-friendly, side-accessible) bottom compartment — all while still having a dedicated laptop section. To keep your gear secure and dry, all three outer flaps zip shut (watertight) and buckle down. The lower section can house the bag's remov-

able Haven, a three-section camera pouch with mesh organizers. Each available in three sizes, you'll have enough space whether you're using a 13-inch laptop and a rangefinder, or a 17-incher with a medium-sized DSLR and lenses. Better yet, you can also mount Crumpler's \$25 Stakeholder to its front to carry smaller tripods.

KEY SPECS: Lifetime warranty, water resistant, convertible interior, dual side-access flaps, camera and laptop storage, TPU tarpaulin and ripstop nylon construction.



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$150

OAKLEY AP 3.0

If you need a ton of pockets, duffel-sized storage and room for a 17-inch laptop — in a package that'll fit underneath airliner seats — look no further than the AP 3.0.

INCASE SLING PACK

Sometimes even a smaller backpack isn't small enough — that's where the Sling Pack comes in. The pack can store a 15-inch MacBook Pro, iPad and iPhone, while still having enough inner pouches to carry your cables and accessories.



BUY
\$80



BAGS AND CASES

Messenger Bags

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BUY
\$80

HEX ACADEMY FOR IPAD

Hex's bags are easy to spot from afar, due to their simply textured and ultra-durable fabrics. Lift up the Academy for iPad's flap, and you'll find a unique see-thru panel that coddles your

tab and lets you access it in a pinch. If that wasn't enough, its inner section can house up to a 13-inch MacBook Pro along with your documents and accessories.

KEY SPECS: Weather-resistant wax coating, PadPort, interior organization slots.



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$109

TIMBUK2 COMMUTE

For one, the 2012 Commute Messenger is super-friendly for laptop-toting fliers, since it's a TSA-certified carry-on. Secondly, you'll be thrilled with the sheer amount of stuff you can carry inside of it.



BUY
\$38

INCASE SLING SLEEVE

The Sling Sleeve is an ultra-slim, no-frills messenger for your laptop, featuring a duo of front storage compartments and a Velcro section at the rear for paperwork. Detach its strap, and it can be carried like a briefcase.



BAGS AND CASES

Odds and Sods

2012
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GUIDE

ASTRO
24.12



BUY
\$30

CRUMPLER ALL AND SUNDRY

Sometimes your bag just doesn't have the organization you need for your odds and sods — that's where the All and Sundry comes in. Essentially a folding, pencil case-esque pouch with a zippered center, you'll be amazed at how many cables, peripherals and miscellaneous items it'll pack into such a small space.

KEY SPECS: Dual compartments, expandable design that folds and snaps together.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

STM BAGS JACKET

The STM Jacket is for those who want the slim form-factor of a neoprene sleeve to protect their laptop, but need a bit of extra space. Like Incase's Sling Sleeve, it's available in sizes for 11- to 17-inch laptops.



BUY
\$30



BUY
\$8

COCOON GRID-IT!

Utilizing an elastic mesh web, you'll be able to organize and secure smaller items in one convenient and flat section that'll slip easily in and out of your bag. Got a ton of stuff? It also comes in a variety of sizes.



DIGITAL CAMERAS



Facebook friends and future employers deserve an accurate account of your glory days, and you'll need a proper snapper to get the job done. To that end, we've compiled a list of cameras fit for every budget, from point-and-shoots to full-fledged DSLRs.

By Zach Honig



DIGITAL CAMERAS

Point-and-Shoot

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SONY CYBER-SHOT RX100

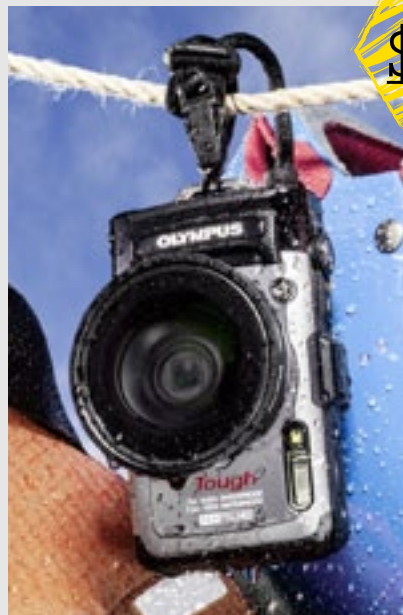
Cheap it is not, but if you're looking to acquire a snapper that offers image quality and versatility that approaches DSLR territory, then the RX100's got your back. This pocketable cam packs a (relatively) huge 1-inch 20.2-megapixel CMOS sensor and an f/1.8 Carl Zeiss Vario-Sonnar T* 3.6x zoom lens. That very capable duo will enable low-light shooting or the creamy bokeh effect often only available with much larger models. With a steep price tag, this jet-black point-and-shoot may seem an unlikely top pick for back to school, but given its capabilities, we wouldn't hesitate to work a few extra shifts in the dining hall to bring this model within reach.

KEY SPECS: 20.2-megapixel 1-inch CMOS sensor, 3.6x f/1.8 optical zoom, 1080/60p HD video.



BUY
\$648

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$399

OLYMPUS TOUGH TG-1iHS

Without mom and dad to come to the rescue, a few extra layers of armor could do you some good. This 12-megapixel ruggedized cam offers a fast f/2 lens, an OLED display and the typical bevy of reinforcements.



BUY
\$180

CANON POWERSHOT ELPH 110HS

You generally can't go wrong with a Canon point-and-shoot. This year's 110HS debuted at CES, offering a 16-megapixel CMOS sensor, 1080p video and a 5x optical zoom lens for \$180.



DIGITAL CAMERAS

Mirrorless

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BUY
\$1,299

OLYMPUS OM-D E-M5

Remember Olympus' line of OM film cams? If you're just now heading to college, chances are you don't. Even so, the E-M5 offers an attractive retro design and incredibly fast focusing performance, includes a Micro Four Thirds mount and a 12-50mm kit lens with manual and powered zoom, along with macro functionality. It's also water-resistant, just like the company's Tough point-and-shoot model you saw above. While the OM-D is an ace stills shooter, its video leaves a bit to be desired, especially when it comes to focusing. Assuming you'll be using it for more than filming parties, though, this ILC is a solid pick.

KEY SPECS: 16-megapixel Live MOS sensor, five-axis image stabilization, 1.44-megapixel EVF.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...

BUY
\$550



SONY NEX-F3

Truth be told, we preferred the sleek design of last year's C3 over Sony's latest NEX-F3, but the front-facing LCD, EVF compatibility, built-in flash and top ISO of 16,000 make 2012's model a suitable replacement.

BUY
\$500



PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-GX1

The GX1 is what Panasonic's GF2 could have been. If you've made your way over to the competition after that Micro Four Thirds line's disappointing successor, this might be a good time to return.



DIGITAL CAMERAS

Digital SLR

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SCHOOL

CANON EOS 5D MARK II

No, our 5D isn't missing a numeral. This top DSLR slot was originally slated to include the brand-new Mark III body, but its predecessor, the 5D Mark II, offers a much lower price tag, and will surely fit the bill for both future photo-journalists and even deep-pocketed amateurs. The full-frame body launched in 2009, which means it can now be had for just shy of two grand — a fraction of its original price tag — and its 21.1-megapixel CMOS sensor is capable of captures on clear days and at dark parties alike. It's also a top pick for videographers, with several years of commercial footage to back that claim. Like other models of this caliber, the 5D will retain much of its value even as the shutter count nears 100k, letting you sell off your rig to, say, buy yourself a nice four-wheeled gift after graduation.

KEY SPECS: 21.1-megapixel full-frame CMOS sensor, ISO 50-25,600, 1080p video.



BUY
\$1,980

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

NIKON D800

Nikon's 5D Mark III equivalent is another excellent choice, but it may be a bit excessive for even the most serious of college photogs. It's also a full-frame shooter, and sports high-end features like uncompressed HDMI.



BUY
\$2,999



BUY
\$817

PENTAX K-30

Pentax's K-30 is an excellent option for photographers on a budget, offering stellar image quality and performance in a ruggedized, water-friendly package. There's also sensor-shift stabilization and AA battery compatibility.



DOCKS AND CLOCKS



If there's any post-adolescent period that deserves its own soundtrack, it's your college years. These speaker docks offer more functionality than your average smartphone clock, and they're certainly better equipped to play DJ when it comes time to close the books.

By Sarah Silbert



DOCKS AND CLOCK

On the Cheap

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LOGITECH CLOCK RADIO S400I

For such a reasonably priced product, this guy doesn't skimp on features. Dual-alarm settings accommodate different sleep schedules, a preset time function lets you drift off without worrying about silencing your tunes and Logitech's stereo sound makes those jams worth pumping.

KEY SPECS: 3.5mm aux jack, iPhone and iPod support, weighs 3.4 pounds.

YOU MIGHT
ALSO LIKE...

BUY
\$55



ALTEC LANSING IMT630

For those on the iOS side of things, the iMT630 offers bass drivers to enhance low-end sound, and the rechargeable lithium-ion battery means you won't be tied to an outlet.

PHILIPS DOCKING SPEAKER WITH BLUETOOTH FOR ANDROID

Philips' docking speaker literally puts your phone on a pedestal with its platform design. The circular shape helps the Neodymium speakers provide omni-directional sound, too.

BUY
\$65



DOCKS AND Mid-Range

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BUY
\$149



SOUNDSTEP RECHARGE GHOST

Yes, it's a speaker dock for your iPod or iPhone, but the Ghost also lets you stream music wirelessly over Bluetooth from any compatible device. The white design is all kinds of sleek and slinky, too.

KEY SPECS: Six hours of battery life, 3.5mm aux jack, remote control app for iOS and Android, weighs 3.1 pounds.

YOU MIGHT
ALSO LIKE...

BUY
\$150



PURE CONTOUR 100I

The WiFi-enabled 100i lets you access internet radio and stream music from your laptop and other connected devices. Though this speaker setup doesn't pack many surprises, its swiveling dock is nifty.

BUY
\$134



JBL ONTIME MICRO

Compatible with iPhones and iPods, the Micro lets you set up to seven independent alarms with the music of your choice, and the loudspeaker system allows for substantially loud sound.



DOCKS AND CLOCKS

Money's No Object

DISTRO
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SAMSUNG DA-E750

BUY
\$698

A series of tubes adds up to something quite beautiful with the DA-E750, which uses glass fiber speakers, a built-in subwoofer and vacuum tubes to push out 100 watts of audio. The real draw, though, is that Ivy League-opulent mahogany trim.

KEY SPECS: iPhone, iPod and Samsung Galaxy device support, AirPlay, AllShare, Bluetooth 3.0, USB Direct Play, remote control, weighs 5 pounds.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$293

PHILIPS DOCKING SPEAKER

50 watts of power will keep you and a few dozen friends on the beat for hours at a time, and the included 3.5mm aux cable will let you connect any audio source. The downside is your roommates might hate you for the rich-kid setup.

PEACHTREE INOVA AMPLIFIER

Salvage the bare-bones desk-and-bed setup with the iNova. It tacks on an iPod dock, boasts an 80 watts-per-channel amplifier, a digital-to-analog converter and a class A headphone amplifier.



BUY
\$1,819



e-READERS



Some of us still walk around hunchbacked from years of carrying heavy textbooks in overstuffed backpacks. Thankfully, an e-reader can significantly lighten that load. Sure, we still have a ways to go before they replace textbooks altogether, but in the long run, e-readers could significantly impact the posture of students everywhere.

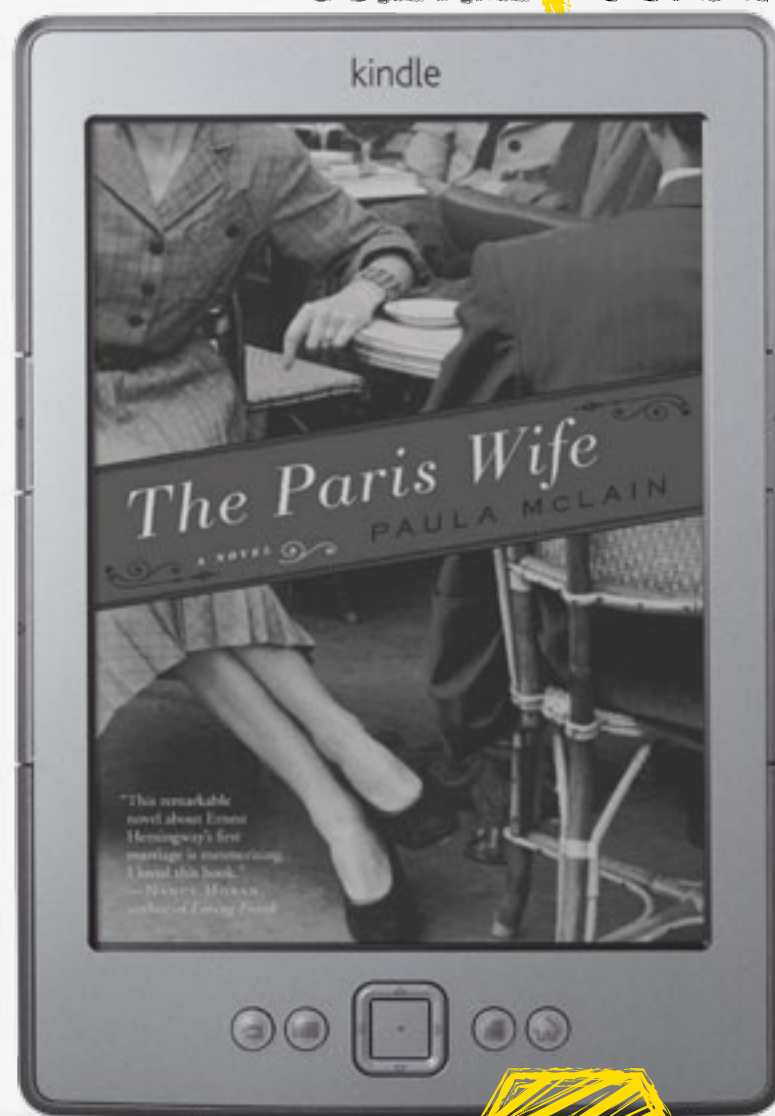
By Brian Heater



KINDLE (2011) WITH SPECIAL OFFERS

A good e-reader at rock-bottom prices? Tell you more, you say? Well, if you don't mind sacrificing your screen-savers and a little bit of your menu real estate to advertisements, boy have we got an e-reader for you. Granted, the subsidized Kindle's "special offers" aren't quite the bonus feature Amazon likes to paint them as, but it's hard to argue with the reader's sub-\$80 price tag. At that price, you're also sacrificing some functionality — namely a touchscreen / keyboard, which can make it a bit tough to input text on the device. Overall, however, you're getting a solid piece of hardware — and access to Amazon's excellent library of content.

KEY SPECS: 6-inch Pearl E Ink display, 2GB non-expandable storage, 800MHz processor.



BUY
\$79

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

BARNES & NOBLE NOOK SIMPLE TOUCH

Barnes & Noble's Nook Simple Touch was our top e-reader pick last year (back when we were still calling it the Nook WiFi). Since then, the device has been the happy recipient of a zippy software upgrade and a \$40 price drop. This ad-free reader is the best you can get for less than \$100.

BUY
\$99



KOBO EREADER TOUCH EDITION

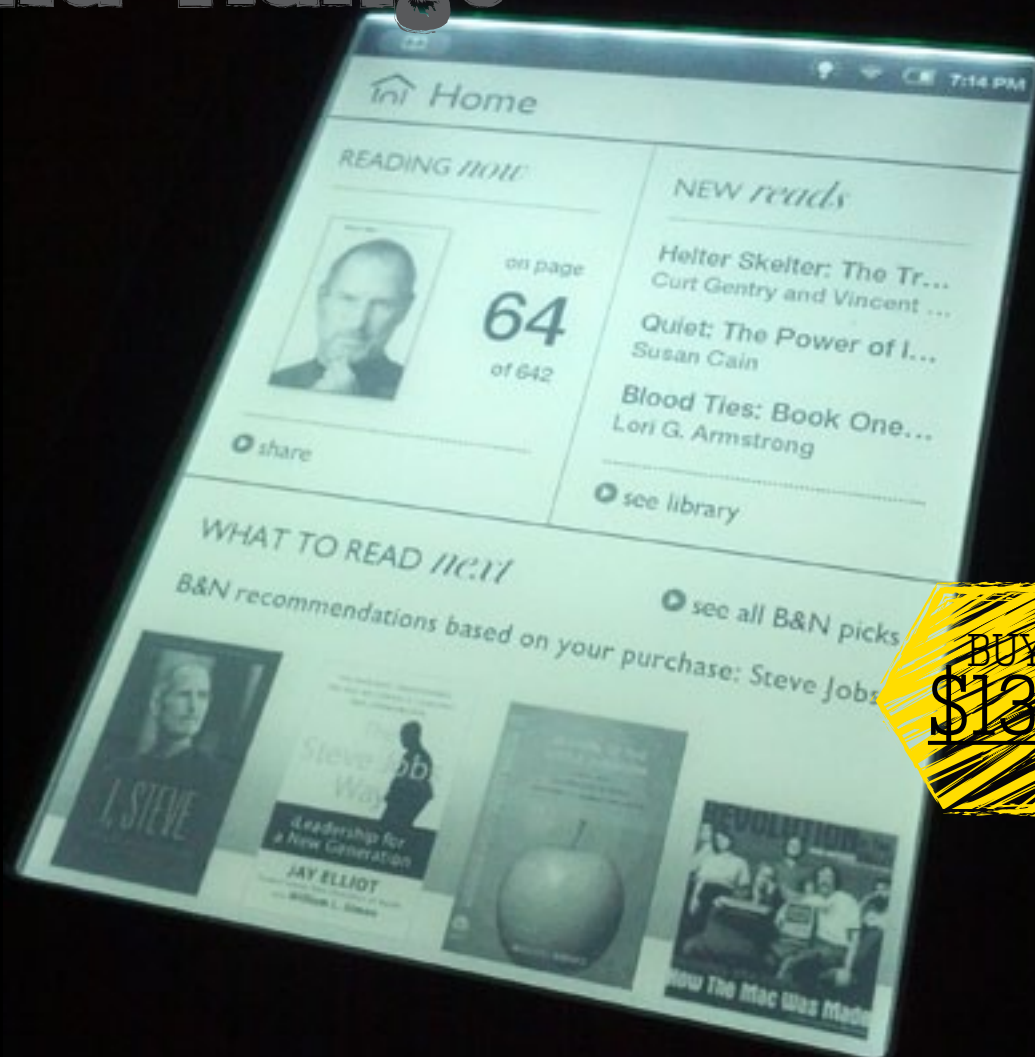
Still Kobo's newest devoted e-reader, the Kobo Touch has also benefited from a healthy price drop since this time last year, now priced at \$100 (or, like the Kindle, \$80 for the ad-based version). It's not the most exciting reader, certainly, but it gets the job done.

BUY
\$80+



E-READERS

Mid-Range



BUY
\$139

BARNES & NOBLE NOOK SIMPLE TOUCH WITH GLOWLIGHT

Barnes & Noble didn't change much with the latest version of its Nook e-reader — and really, with the previous version of the device having nabbed the top spot on this list last year, there's not really a heck of a lot that needed changing. You've got a great form factor, smooth page turning and expandable memory to name but a few. Add to that the titular GlowLight functionality, and you've got a great e-reader that you can read in harsh sunlight or long after everyone else has gone to bed. Barnes & Noble also managed to pack that added functionality into a slightly lighter body.

KEY SPECS: 6-inch Pearl E Ink display, 2GB / expandable memory, proprietary GlowLight technology, 800MHz processor.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$189

KINDLE TOUCH 3G

It ain't cheap, sure, but anywhere AT&T's 3G signal reaches can become a virtual bookstore, offering up access to Amazon's excellent e-book library. At \$189, this high-end reader is nearly the same price as the Kindle Fire, but the connectivity is an excellent choice for travelers.



BUY
\$130

SONY READER WIFI

Looking for the sorts of extras standard e-readers just can't offer? Sony's WiFi reader has features galore, bringing music playback, dual-touch pinch-to-zoom and handwritten note-taking. You also get a lending library and built-in access to Google Books.

12
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BARNES & NOBLE NOOK TABLET

Those looking for an e-reader that's more than just an e-reader needn't look any further than Barnes & Noble's offering. The Nook Tablet is probably more appropriately a low-end tablet with e-reading functionality, but at \$200, it's not really a huge premium over many existing readers — and you get a heck of a lot more, including sharp video, full color and access to Android apps. Of course, reading marathons on this 7-incher can be a lot harsher than on its e-ink counterparts.

KEY SPECS: 7-inch IPS display, 8GB storage (16GB for \$50 more), 1GHz processor.

BUY
\$199



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

AMAZON KINDLE FIRE

For \$200, you can also get your hands on Amazon's Kindle Fire. Of course, you're going to be losing out on a few key features here compared to e-ink readers, including the marathon battery life and outdoor readability. What you do get, however, is tablet functionality.

BUY
\$199



GOOGLE NEXUS 7

The Nexus 7 should be taken just as seriously as the competition. Kindle, Nook and even Kobo apps are all available for Android, and the stock OS means full access to Google Play, along with tablet settings and a bounty of books and magazines available directly from Google.

BUY
\$199



Fun Stuff



Laptops, phones and e-readers might be slick pieces of tech, but they'll mostly be used for business while you're buried in term papers this semester. In the spirit of letting loose, here's a collection of devices that are all about having a little work-free fun.

By Jon Fingas



FUN STUFF

On the Cheap

DISTRO
08.24.12

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HASBRO LAZER TAG

Playing a first-person shooter on a game console is for rookies. Lazer Tag brings the action to real life with a modern twist on the light gun formula: that iOS device dock allows for player health, shields and scorekeeping elements that you'd never have seen in the original 1986 version. Just be sure to spur a few purchases among friends if you want a more action-packed experience.

KEY SPECS: Light blaster, dock for an iPhone or iPod touch, single-player and multiplayer modes.



BUY
\$40

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

WAHOO FITNESS BLUE SC

If you regularly pedal your way to campus, the Blue SC will keep pace and send the results to the iPhone in your pocket. And support that extends to other apps may prove to be an extra incentive to go out for one more ride each week.

BUY
\$40



BUY
\$30



JADA BATTLE MACHINES HELI

Remote-controlled helicopters are perennial favorites for a burst of fun during downtime — and this year, you won't have to worry too much if your aircraft crashes into a roommate.



FUN STUFF

Mid-Range

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BUY
\$400

GARMIN FENIX

GPS watches are seemingly a dime a dozen, but the Fenix stands out for its completeness. It'll track your run like its peers, but it'll also plot the paths out and back during that Indian summer camping trip. Wireless support puts the watch in a connected universe, and the rugged design will keep the Fenix ticking if that rafting trip (or pool party) gets out of hand.

KEY SPECS: GPS watch with trail navigation, ANT, Bluetooth wireless support, scratch resistance and waterproofing.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...

BUY
\$133



MOTOROLA MOTOACTV

Another watch, you say? Not quite: the MOTOACTV is more of an MP3 player for the athletically inclined. The device has seen a price cut even as it adds extras like Facebook and Twitter connections.

BUY
\$300



PARROT AR.DRONE 2.0

If you want the ultimate in remote-control diversions, Parrot's AR.Drone 2.0 is the way to go. It's pricier than Jada's aircraft, but you can record its exploits in HD, on top of taking control of it from an Android or iOS device.



IROBOT ROOMBA 790

College-goers can attest to that sinking feeling after waking up to a floor covered in grime from the previous night's festivities.

While it might not help you remember what happened, iRobot's Roomba 790 will at least make sure the floor is clean. You might not even have to get out of bed: wireless control will start the vacuuming without requiring a walk over to the robot itself. The 790 isn't cheap, but it might be worth the cost if it leads to more studying than scrubbing.

KEY SPECS: Robot floor cleaning with multi-room navigation, wireless remote control.



BUY
\$700

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$650

ZBOARD SKATEBOARD

Sometimes, skateboarding isn't all about popping ollies. The ZBoard might be the slickest way to get to class, and in a way that won't wear out your legs or the world's oil supply.

BRAMMO EMPULSE R

There had to be at least one dream gadget in the mix. Brammo's Empulse R is one of the fastest ways to go green without a roof. At \$4 of energy for every 400 miles, it might even save frequent riders some money in the long run.



BUY
\$18,995



GAMING



It's time to balance out that study with some well-deserved leisure. Whether you're looking for a dedicated gaming device, or something that rides the line between work and play, everyone deserves a little stress relief after a day buried in the books.

By Mat Smith



NINTENDO DSi

While we've already reached the second generation of 3DS hardware, there has been more good news from Nintendo since last year's guide. Yes, this time, the camera-toting DSi got a substantial price cut — down to around \$100+, depending on your color preferences. There's still a raft of respectable games for the elder statesman of Nintendo handhelds and the DSi was also the first to connect to Nintendo's online store, with an increasing selection of mini-games and retro titles available for download over WiFi.

KEY SPECS: Dual 3.25-inch displays, two cameras, SD card slot, WiFi.

YOU MIGHT
ALSO LIKE...

NYKO POWER GRIP FOR VITA

Nyko says its Power Grip will double your handheld play time — a boon for the otherwise precarious battery life of the PS Vita. The extended handles should also make those longer gaming sessions a cinch, though the rig's unlikely to fit in your pocket anymore.

XBOX 360
TWO-YEAR
SUBSCRIPTION
BUNDLE

Granted, you'll have to be willing to pay an additional \$15 per month for the two-year term, but for a lot of us, that's a pretty manageable price for the best-selling console in recent history. Rounded out by a Kinect, it's a very solid package for a \$100 entry fee.



SONY PLAYSTATION VITA

There's no handheld with quite as much power as Sony's latest effort. It's also been around for a few months now, with several appealing game bundles now making the rounds and Sony's online game catalog continuing to expand. A capacitive touchscreen and dual analog sticks arguably make it the gamers' handheld console, while those feeling slightly more flush have the option to pony up a little more cash for the 3G version.

KEY SPECS: 5-inch OLED display, dual analog controls, dual touchscreens, WiFi, backwards compatibility with PSP titles online.



BUY
\$250

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

NINTENDO 3DS XL

Nintendo's newest handheld has only just recently appeared on US soil, but that didn't stop us putting it through the review wringer ahead of its launch. A bigger screen, more pervasive 3D effect and longer battery life make it a noticeable improvement over the original 3DS.



BUY
\$200

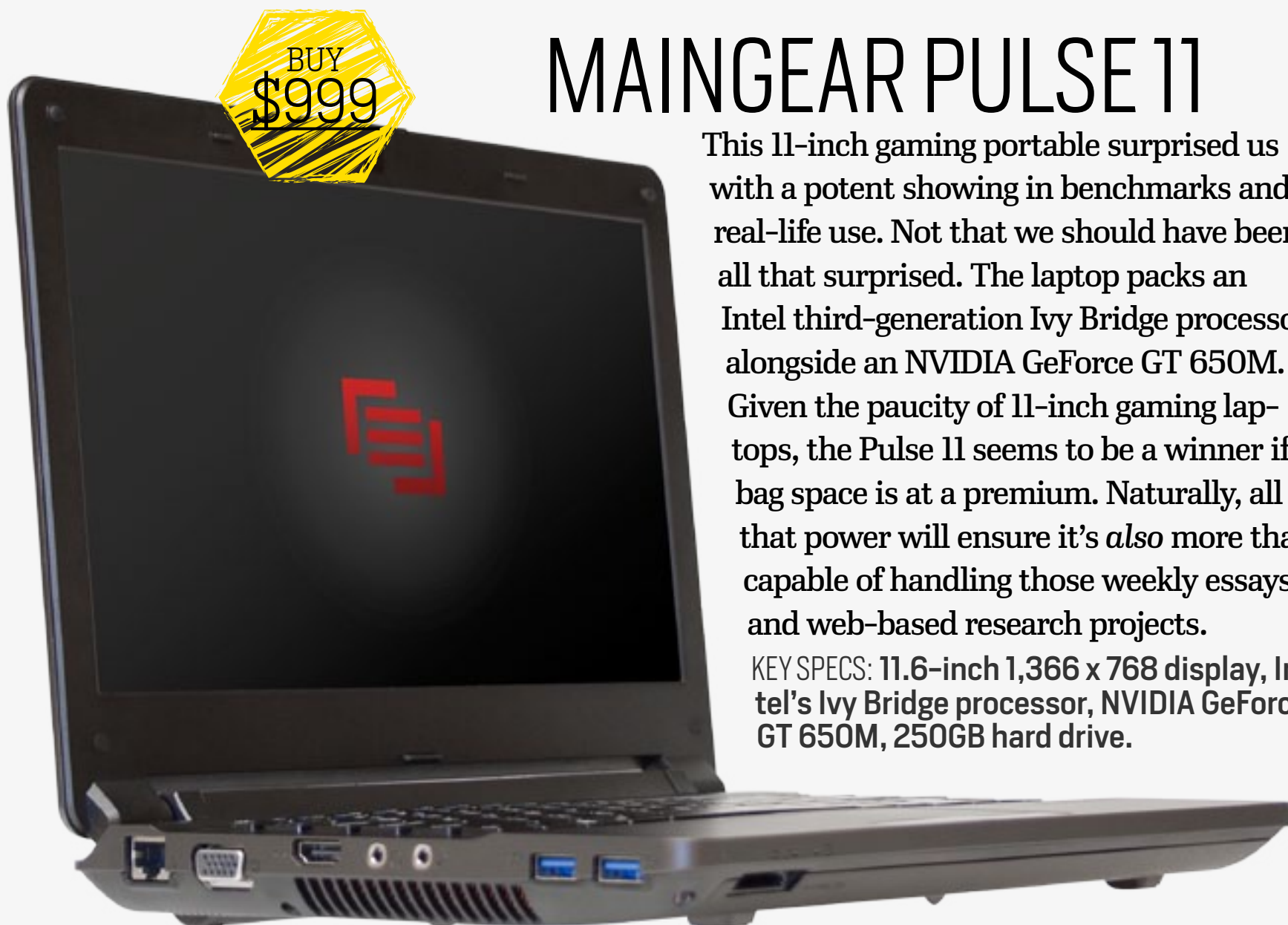


PS3 320GB CALL OF DUTY MW 3 BUNDLE

Sony's console doesn't seem to be shaking things up as much as its Microsoft rival when it comes to pricing, but the latest *Modern Warfare* bundle now manages to duck under the \$300 mark. This nets you a 320GB system, a controller, a copy of *MW3* and, naturally, an embedded Blu-ray player.

BUY
\$300



BUY
\$999

MAINGEAR PULSE 11

This 11-inch gaming portable surprised us with a potent showing in benchmarks and real-life use. Not that we should have been all that surprised. The laptop packs an Intel third-generation Ivy Bridge processor alongside an NVIDIA GeForce GT 650M. Given the paucity of 11-inch gaming laptops, the Pulse 11 seems to be a winner if bag space is at a premium. Naturally, all that power will ensure it's *also* more than capable of handling those weekly essays and web-based research projects.

KEY SPECS: 11.6-inch 1,366 x 768 display, Intel's Ivy Bridge processor, NVIDIA GeForce GT 650M, 250GB hard drive.

YOU MIGHT
ALSO LIKE...APPLE
IPAD
(2012)

Apple continues to offer a rich selection of gaming wares in its App Store.

If you have the money, then the third-generation model could be worth the extra investment over older flavors, with a super-crisp display and a battery life that's likely to last 'til the final bell.

BUY
\$499BUY
\$1,499

ALIENWARE M17X

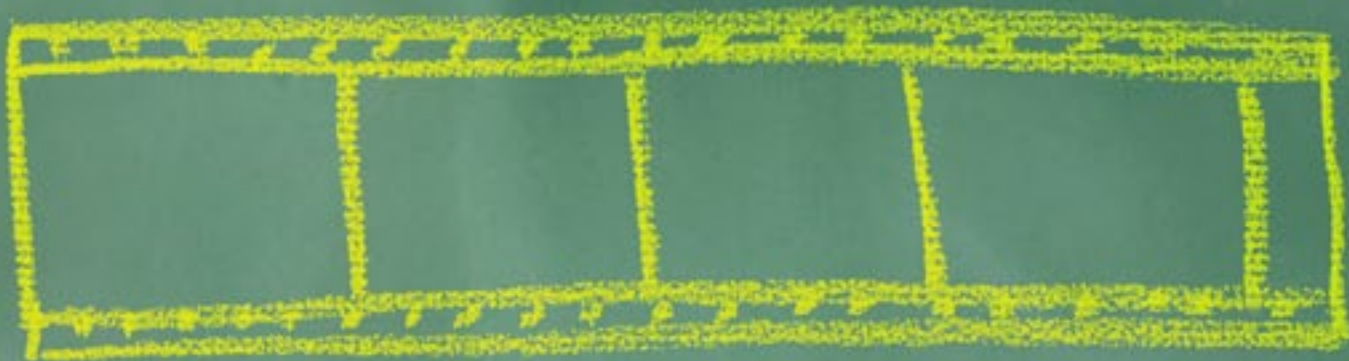
For gaming laptops that could dominate your backpack, Alienware's latest refresh fits the bill. Now customizable with the latest NVIDIA GeForce GTX 680M and still compatible with 3D Vision, the M17x is powered by Intel's new Ivy Bridge processor range.



HDTV

Students today can catch high-quality video on a variety of screens, but nothing can truly replace a TV's role as the center of entertainment. Whether it's a quick *Madden* or *Call of Duty* session, inviting a friend over to catch a flick or just zoning out after class, having the proper setup makes all the difference.

By Richard Lawler



APPLE TV (2012)

Other media streamers, like the Roku and Western Digital families, as well as Vizio's upcoming Co-Star Google TV box, are excellent options in the same price range, so why did we pick this one? Although it received only a minor hardware refresh after two years that brought support for 1080p video, a steady flow of software improvements is what makes Apple's hockey puck the must-have HDTV accessory for anyone that's already bought into the company's ecosystem. An expanding suite of channels, iCloud-powered Digital Copy enhancements, AirPlay streaming from iOS devices and the latest version of Mac OS make the add-on an easy recommendation. Its sub-\$100 price tag seals the deal.

KEY SPECS: A5 CPU, 512MB RAM, 1080p, 8GB storage, 802.11n.



BUY
\$99

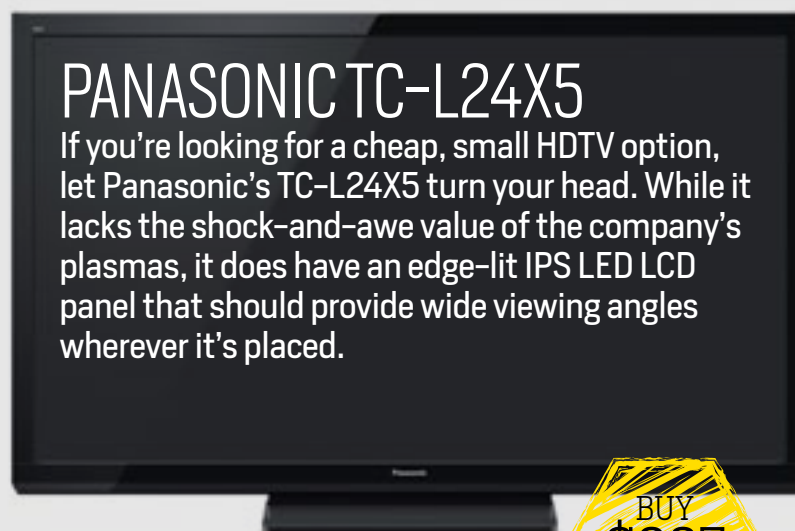
YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



SONY BDP-S590

You can't throw a rock in an electronics store without hitting a Blu-ray player, but the BDP-S590 snags our attention by ticking all of the feature checkboxes. It packs WiFi and Blu-ray 3D support, as well as a strong list of internet video sources. The only omission of note? MLB.tv.

BUY
\$119



PANASONIC TC-L24X5

If you're looking for a cheap, small HDTV option, let Panasonic's TC-L24X5 turn your head. While it lacks the shock-and-awe value of the company's plasmas, it does have an edge-lit IPS LED LCD panel that should provide wide viewing angles wherever it's placed.

BUY
\$237



HDTV

Mid-Range

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BUY
\$468

SONY STR-DN1030

Sony's STR-DN1030 7.2-channel receiver may not look different from the rest of the crowd, but by coming out of the box with WiFi and Bluetooth built-in, it is ready to fit in with the connected TV lifestyle we've come to expect. It can stream media from portable devices both Apple and otherwise with ease and supports Sony's Media Remote apps on Android and iOS. More traditional sources can plug into the seven HD inputs, of course, but we find wires to be so ... restrictive.

KEY SPECS: 7.2-channel audio, Dolby True HD, Pro Logic IIz, DTS-HD codec support, 1,015 watts (145w x seven).

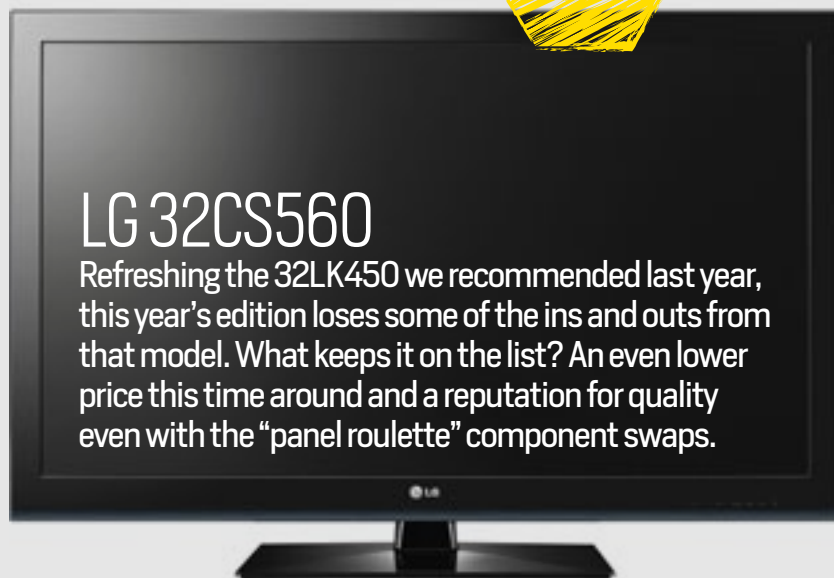


YOU MIGHT
ALSO LIKE...

BUY
\$320

LG 32CS560

Refreshing the 32LK450 we recommended last year, this year's edition loses some of the ins and outs from that model. What keeps it on the list? An even lower price this time around and a reputation for quality even with the "panel roulette" component swaps.



PANASONIC VIERA TC-P50U50

The sole 1080p model in Panasonic's 2012 lineup without 3D features, the TC-P50U50 brings the company's well-refined display technology and little else to the table. While it also ditches any connected TV features, it should still look great on your wall without breaking the bank.

BUY
\$699



HDTV

Money's No Object

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PANASONIC VIERA TC-P55GT50

Updated for 2012, the TC-P55GT50 carries the best value tag if you still want an HDTV that has everything. A step down from the absolute top-of-the-line VT50 model, it keeps

the “Infinite Black Panel” technology, THX certification and much more at a significantly lower price, although it has gone up slightly from last year. What’s a few hundred dollars extra on your student loan anyway, right?

KEY SPECS: 55-inch, 1080p, 3D, four HDMI inputs, three USB inputs, DLNA, WiFi, THX-certified, 24,576 shades of gradation.

BUY
\$1,599



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

SAMSUNG UN55ES6580

Samsung has the widest lineup of any HDTV manufacturer, but the UN55ES6580 is our first pick, with a matte finish that should help if glare is a consideration. It’s a little pricier than Panasonic’s plasma, but comes with four pairs of 3D glasses and Samsung’s Smart TV apps.

BUY
\$1,716



SHARP AQUOS LC60LE640U

This LC60LE640U can’t match its Elite cousins for picture quality, but at around \$1,500, it spreads the viewing area significantly more than its 50- or 55-inch competition. It drops 3D from the high-end feature list, but keeps WiFi for all your Netflix streaming needs.

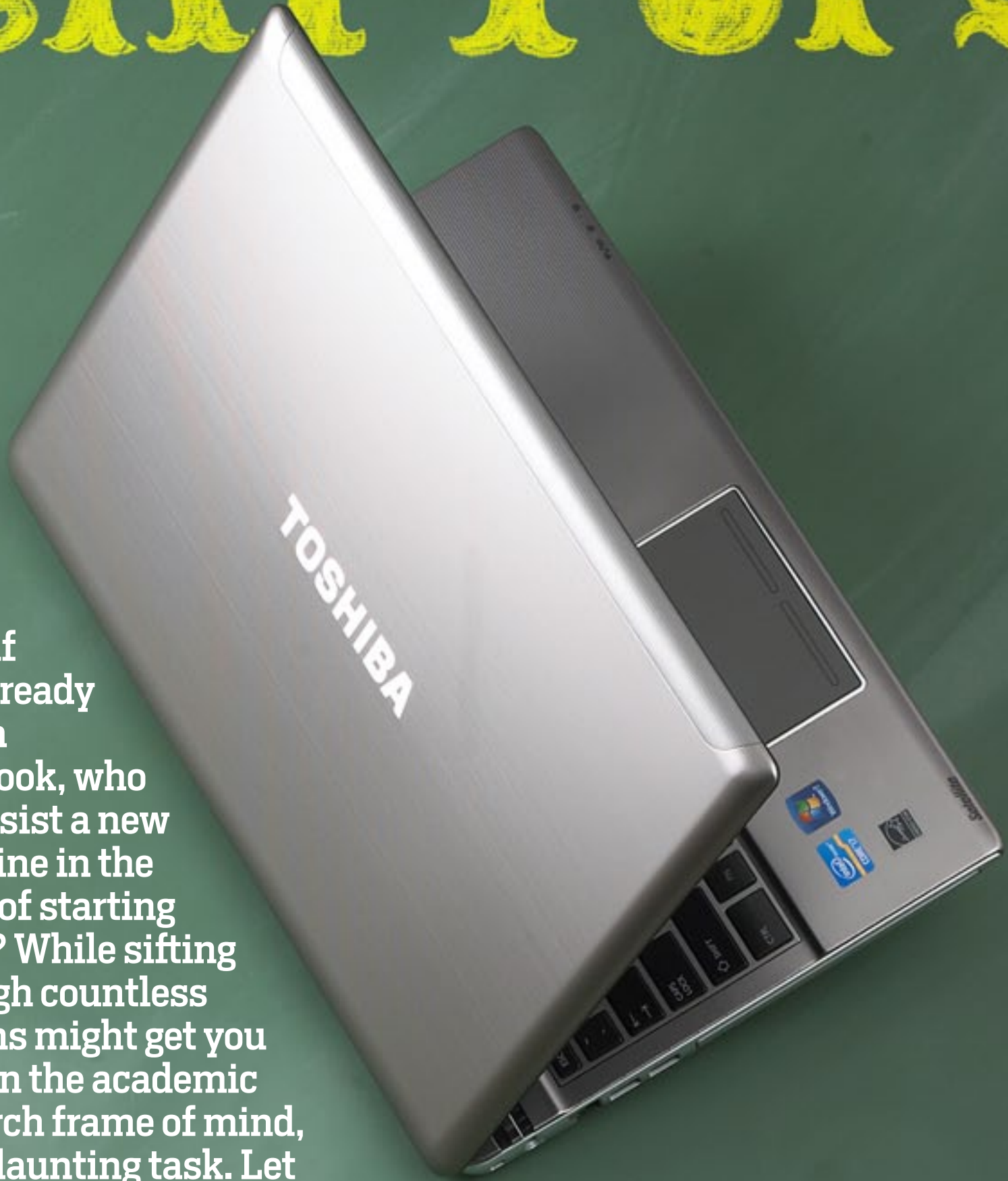
BUY
\$1,442



LAPTOPS

Even if you already have a notebook, who can resist a new machine in the spirit of starting fresh? While sifting through countless options might get you back in the academic research frame of mind, it's a daunting task. Let us take some work off your plate with these nine solid mainstream laptops.

By Sarah Silbert



LAPTOPS

On the Cheap

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SONY VAIO E SERIES

Sony's VAIO E Series is available in 11.6-, 14- and 15.5-inch flavors, all of which sport a new "wrap design" that reminds us of a notebook (the pen and paper kind). Though the E Series got the

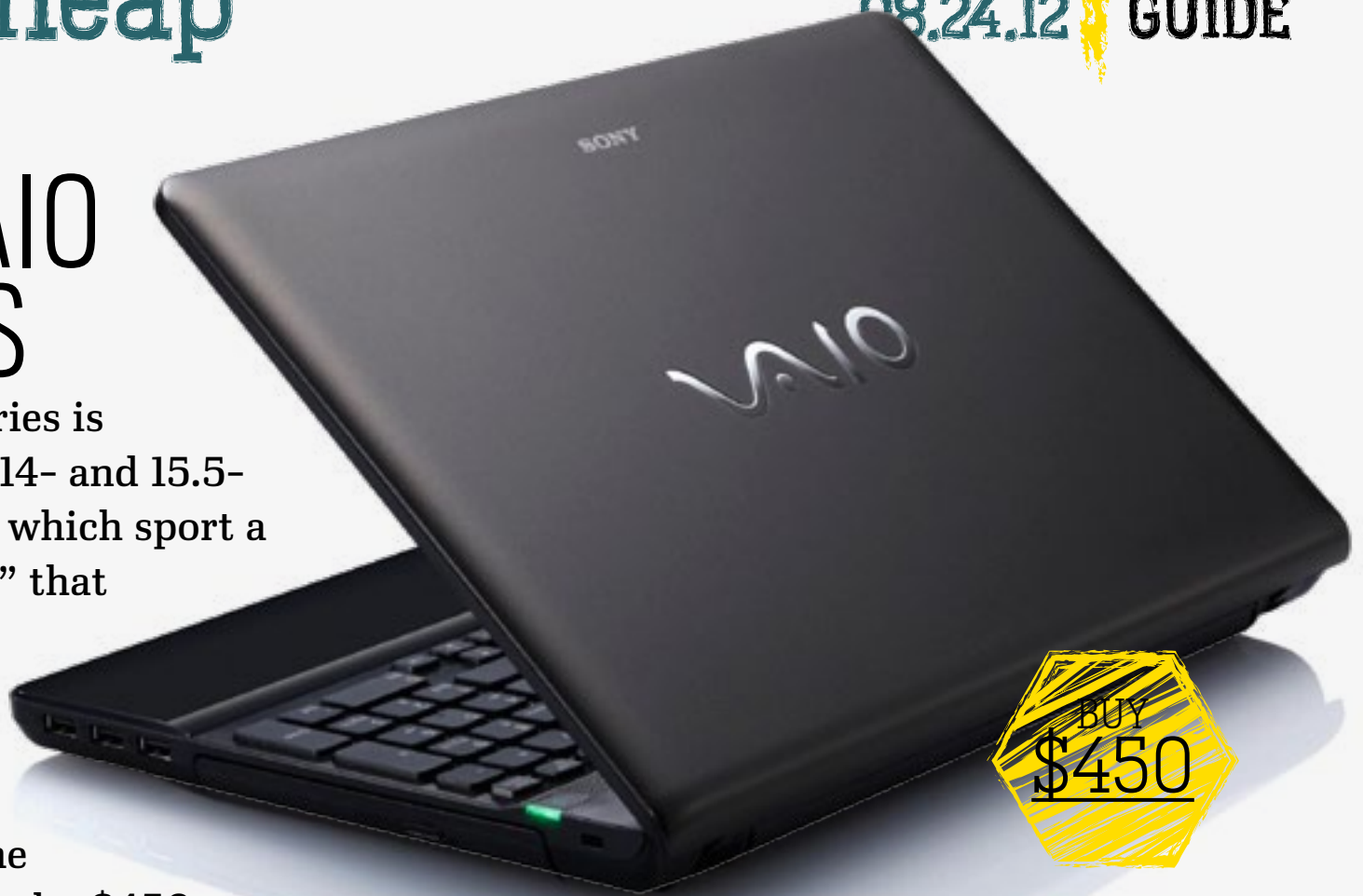
Ivy Bridge refresh, the \$450

11-incher runs an AMD E2-1800 CPU, and

the entry-level 14-inch model offers an Intel Pentium chip.

All models feature a standard 1,366 x 768 display, though you can trick out the two larger sizes with backlit keyboards.

KEY SPECS: 11.6-inch (1,366 x 768) display, dual-core 1.7GHz AMD E2-1800, 4GB of RAM and a 500GB, 5,400RPM hard drive.



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

HP PAVILION DV6

Non-Intel CPUs have a happy home in the budget-laptop space, and HP's new dv6 lineup gives AMD some love in the base configuration. For \$550, you get a dual-core A6-4400M processor clocked at 2.6GHz, though stepping up to pricier models earns you Ivy Bridge insides.



SAMSUNG SERIES 3

So the Samsung Series 3 didn't get the Ivy Bridge upgrade this time around but the notebook does have a sleek design with brushed-chrome trim, and it's far from ill-equipped. The line is highly customizable, offering Pentium processors all the way up to Core i7, and storage ranges from 320GB up to 1TB.



LAPTOPS

Mid-Range

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TOSHIBA SATELLITE P850-BT2N22

The P in Toshiba's Satellite P line stands for "premium," and the 15.6-inch P850 does boast a lovely Champagne Silver etched-aluminum design and Harman Kardon audio rather than the SRS technology found on its C and L Series counterparts. This 5.4-pounder includes 6GB of RAM and 640GB of storage, though stepping up to the \$800 configuration affords you a 1TB hard drive. Though there's an optical drive on board, you won't find an SD card slot here.

KEY SPECS: 15.6-inch (1,366 x 768) display, dual-core 2.5GHz Intel Core i5-3210M, starting at 6GB of RAM and a 5,400RPM, 640GB hard drive.

BUY
\$600



YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...

BUY
\$800



DELL INSPIRON 15R SPECIAL EDITION

This special edition lives up to its name with a healthy selection of special extras. Skullcandy headphones come bundled, and there's an anodized aluminum lid. You get your choice of Core i5 or Core i7 Ivy Bridge CPUs, up to 8GB of RAM and up to a 1TB hard drive.

BUY
\$900



SONY VAIO S

This 13.3-inch model weighs 3.8 pounds and measures 0.95 inches thick. A third-gen Intel CPU, optional discrete graphics from NVIDIA (for \$100 more) and a DVD drive are solid incentives too, as are the seven tasteful color options and up to seven hours of battery life.



MACBOOK PRO (2012)

College campuses are littered with notebooks bearing that famous Apple logo these days, and if you (or your parents — let's be honest) are well-heeled enough to shell out for the recently updated MacBook Pro, it's a sound investment. Trust fund types might prefer the Retina display model, but the standard Pro, with its Ivy Bridge processor and famously comfortable keyboard and touchpad, is far from a slacker. We do recommend shelling out for an SSD, though.

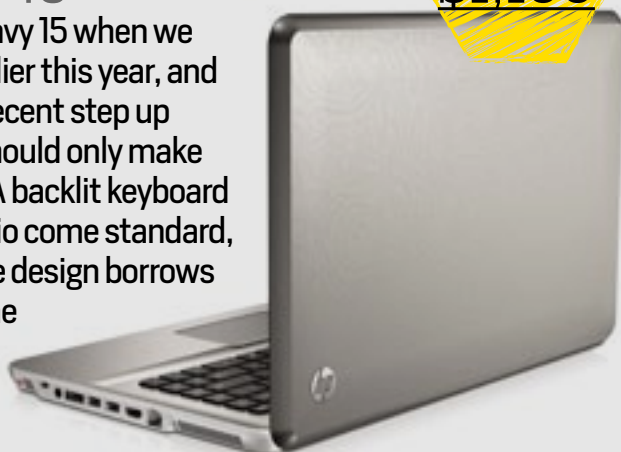
KEY SPECS: 13-inch (1,280 x 800) display, dual-core Intel Core i5, starts at 4GB of RAM and a 5,400RPM, 500GB hard drive.



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

HP ENVY 15

We liked the Envy 15 when we reviewed it earlier this year, and the system's recent step up to Ivy Bridge should only make things better. A backlit keyboard and Beats Audio come standard, and though the design borrows heavily from the MacBook Pro, this 5.8-pound laptop is a looker.



SAMSUNG SERIES 7 CHRONOS (15-INCH)

Sammy now has a solid step down in its 7 Series. Now running a Core i7 Ivy Bridge processor, the 15-inch Series 7 Chronos doesn't ditch the generous feature selection of earlier models. You get NVIDIA GeForce GT630M graphics, an optical drive and 1TB of storage.



PORTABLE AUDIO



With all that studying and cross-campus traveling in your near future, a little musical accompaniment is in order. They may not be audiophile-grade in the official sense, but these headphones and speakers will keep you rocking and talking, whatever the assignment.

By Joe Pollicino



KLIPSCH IMAGE S4 (II) HEADPHONES

Klipsch's S4 series in-ears have been a favorite of Engadget for a while, thanks to their comfy oval eartips, pleasingly smooth audio and relatively modest pricing. Now in their second generation, the in-ears (which can also be had with an inline remote / mic for iOS and Android devices) feature tangle-proof flat cabling to lessen time spent fiddling with knotted cords on the go.

KEY SPECS: Tangle-resistant flat cabling, inline remote / mic, carrying case, oval-shaped ear tips.



BUY
\$79

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

AIAIAI CAPITAL

The Capital on-ears by Danish company AIAIAI tout an impact- and water-resistant fiberglass casing, an inline remote and a foldable design; these cans should handle the rigors of your dorm lifestyle admirably.



BUY
\$125

KOSS PORTA PRO KTC

The Koss Porta Pro has been a favorite among headphone lovers for a long time. Now available in a KTC variant, the cult classic has been subtly tweaked for the 21st century with an iOS-compatible inline remote / mic.



BUY
\$79



PORTABLE AUDIO

Mid-Range

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HARMAN KARDON BT / CL

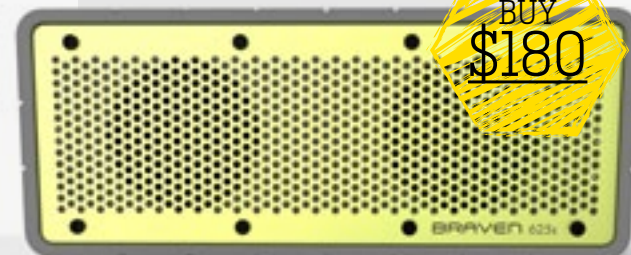
Bowers & Wilkins' P5 may finally have some competition in classiness, thanks to Harman Kardon's latest leather-clad over-ear cans: the Bluetooth (BT) and Classic (CL). Wireless lovers will appreciate the BT's on-earcup playback controls, while those who prefer cables get to command their playlists with the CL's inline remote and mic.

KEY SPECS: Steel and leather construction, over-ear fit, foldable earcups for storage.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...

BRAVEN 625

The OG Jambox ushered in the portable Bluetooth speakerphone craze, but Braven's 600 series takes the idea further. The 625 has a 1,700 mAh battery that'll power up your USB gadgets or its bundled LED flashlight.



SONY XBA-3IP

Lest we forget that Sony knows a thing or two about in-ears loaded with balanced armature drivers. We were impressed with the clarity offered by the XBA-3 when we tried 'em out, and you can add iDevice inline remote / mic for an extra \$20.



PORTABLE AUDIO

Money's No Object

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PARROT ZIK BY STARCK

The Parrot Zik is optimal for audio-loving geeks. It's jam-packed with tech including Bluetooth, NFC for device pairing, active noise cancellation (assisted by four of five onboard mics), a sound-shaping Android and iOS app and touch-activated playback control — not to mention a jawbone sensor that helps its mic pick up your voice during calls and a pressure sensor that knows to pause and start your tunes when you take 'em on and off your head. Then there's the gorgeous leather-and-metal-clad design by Philippe Starck that also makes these headphones ultra-comfortable. Despite some Bluetooth hiccups and a short six-hour battery life that'll keep you tethered via USB unless you opt for a spare \$30 battery, the Zik is a winner.

KEY SPECS: NFC, active noise cancellation aided by four mics, touch-activated playback control, jawbone sensor, dedicated speech microphone, swappable Li-ion battery, Bluetooth 2.1, audio-enhancing app, pressure sensor for head detection, passive functionality.



BUY
\$400

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

JAWBONE BIG JAMBOX

Gobs of volume in a relatively portable package is the essence of the Big Jambox. This 2.7-pound Bluetooth speakerphone can be carried in one hand and an internal 2,600mAh battery offers 15 hours of music.



BUY
\$300

SENNHEISER AMPERIOR

The Amperior comes from the same mold as the HD 25, but it has easier-to-drive 18-ohm drivers and an Apple-oriented inline remote, letting you push its "DJ-inspired" clear sound with thick bass into your ears without a DAC.



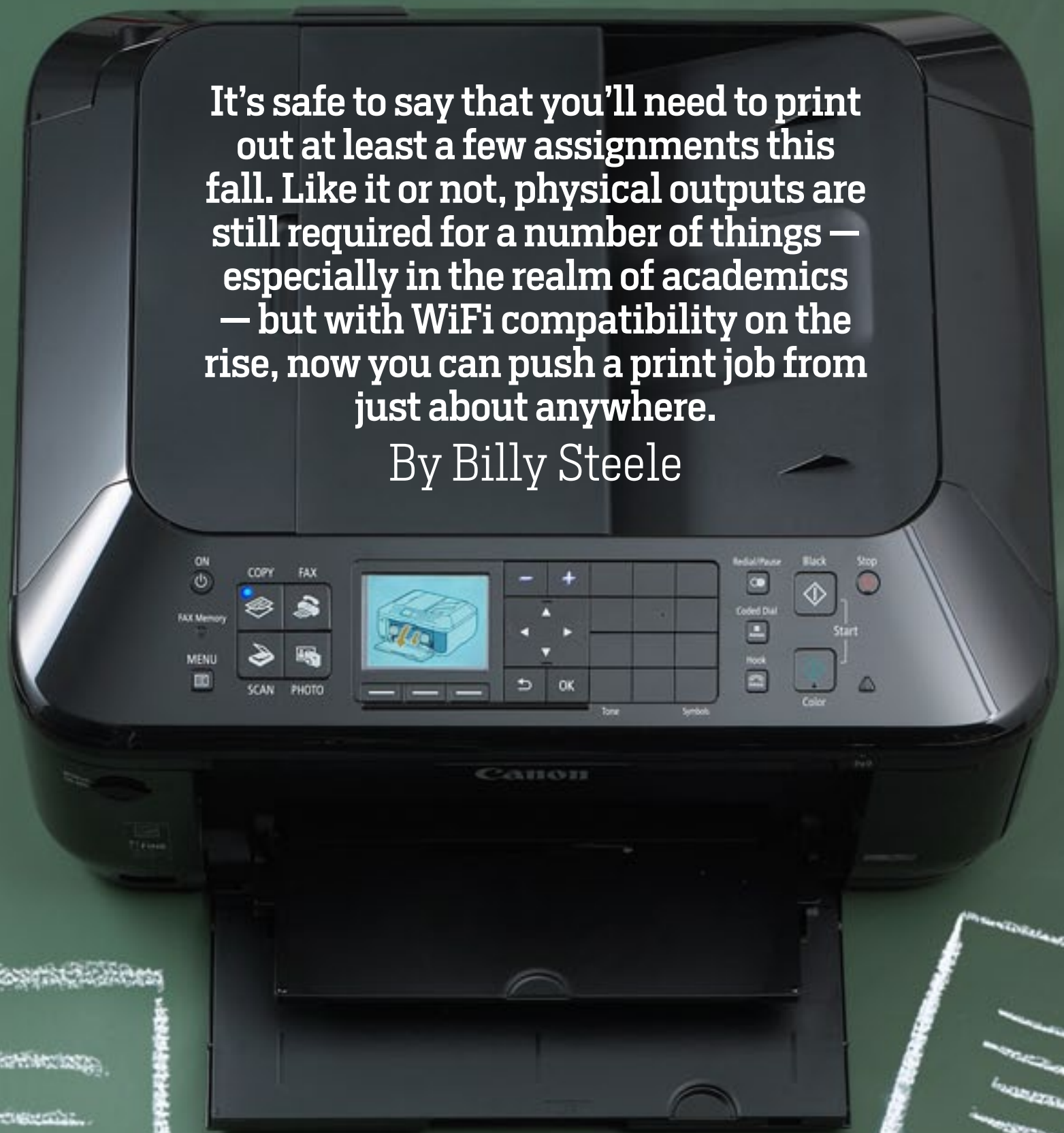
BUY
\$350



PRINTERS

It's safe to say that you'll need to print out at least a few assignments this fall. Like it or not, physical outputs are still required for a number of things — especially in the realm of academics — but with WiFi compatibility on the rise, now you can push a print job from just about anywhere.

By Billy Steele



PRINTERS

All-in-One

DISTRO
08.24.12

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CANON PIXMA MX512

It's best to be prepared for anything, wouldn't you say? The MX512 is capable of any print-related task that may arise. Alongside faxing, scanning and copying capabilities, this unit boasts a max 4,800 DPI, built-in WiFi, Bluetooth, AirPrint and auto-duplex printing. It packs a 2.5-inch LCD for selecting images and files directly from a USB thumb drive or SD card.

KEY SPECS: 4,800 DPI max resolution, WiFi, Ethernet, Bluetooth, AirPrint, LCD display, auto-duplex printing, USB / SD card, two ink cartridges (black and color).



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



HP PHOTOSMART 5520

Don't think you'll need to fax a transcript? You may want to look here. Also touting 4,800 max DPI, the 5520 "e-all-in-one" sports HP's ePrint connectivity, WiFi, USB / SD slots, a 2.65-inch LCD touchscreen and direct-to-email scanning.

EPSON EXPRESSION XP-200

The XP-200 offers all-in-one functionality in a compact package. With all the requisite specs to handle your printing, copying and scanning, this peripheral is WiFi-ready and allows wireless printing from your mobile devices.



PRINTERS

Inkjet

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BUY
\$100

HP OFFICEJET 6100

Not in the market for all of the bells and whistles that an all-in-one offers? No worries. The 6100 can handle a 12,000-page monthly workload while allowing you to print from just about anywhere thanks to HP's ePrint tech and AirPrint compatibility. You'll also find WiFi connectivity, 4,800 max DPI and both USB and Ethernet ports for your borderless printing needs up to 8.5 x 11 inches.

KEY SPECS: HP ePrint, AirPrint, WiFi, Ethernet, borderless printing, four ink cartridges (black, cyan, magenta and yellow), water-resistant outputs.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

HP OFFICEJET PRO 8100

Don't think the 6100 has quite enough to handle your workload? Well, splurging for the 8100 model nets you professional-grade color. An on-board control panel and graphic display will lend a hand while auto-duplex printing keeps costs down.



BUY
\$150



BUY
\$250

EPSON ARTISAN 1430

For those looking to produce projects on a larger scale, the Artisan 1430 is a safe bet. Here, you'll be able to print up to 13 x 19 inches and directly onto CDs and DVDs with the unit's six ink cartridges.



BROTHER HL-3075CW

It's no secret that Brother knows what it takes to make solid laser printers. With the HL-3075CW, you'll get color output with WiFi connectivity. This unit boasts a 19-page-per-minute speed and a USB interface for grabbing photos and documents directly from a connected storage device. You'll also be able to print from your Android, iOS or Windows Phone device with the Brother iPrint&Scan application.

KEY SPECS: Blazing output speeds, WiFi, Ethernet, USB 2.0, direct printing from USB storage devices, iPrint&Scan for mobile devices.



BUY
\$250

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



BUY
\$123

HP LASERJET PRO P1102W

Cranking out research papers like there's no tomorrow? A black-and-white laser printer may be a solid bet. You'll still get the WiFi connectivity, HP ePrint and AirPrint capabilities alongside 19-page-per-minute speeds.



BUY
\$80

BROTHER HL-2230

Looking to spend a little less on that black-and-white laser printer? Brother's HL-2230 is capable of outputting 24 pages in a minute, but the reduced price tag will cost you wireless printing functionality.



SMART PHONES

It's a good time to be a student. Thanks to cutthroat competition, there are some exceptional phones on



the market today, even for those of you hoping to avoid eating ramen noodles for a month.

By
John
Fingas



SMARTPHONES

Prepaid / Budget

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NOKIA LUMIA 900

The Lumia 900 now sits in the budget category thanks to a price cut, although you almost wouldn't know it from the features. LTE? A 4.3-inch screen? A capable 8-megapixel camera? Check. And while some look at that simple Metro interface and the smaller app market with a jaded eye, Windows Phone is a good pick if you're new to smartphones and like living in Microsoft's ecosystem.

KEY SPECS: 1.4GHz single-core Snapdragon CPU, 4.3-inch WVGA display, 8MP rear / 1MP front cameras, Windows Phone 7.5.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...



IPHONE 4

Don't be put off by the up-front price — look at the \$35 monthly plan on Virgin Mobile and you'll know how much you'll save in the long run. Mating a Retina display, a still-solid 5-megapixel camera and iOS 5 with a cheap unlimited data plan? That's an easy choice.



HTC ONE V

It might be the baseline of HTC's 2012 smartphone triumvirate, but the One V is no slouch. That rigid design, 1GHz processor, pretty 3.7-inch WVGA display and capable 5-megapixel camera add up to a compelling starter smartphone. Android 4.0 also stands out in a crowd full of basic devices.



SMARTPHONES

Mid-Range

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BUY
\$349



SAMSUNG GALAXY NEXUS HSPA+

If it weren't for the need to (normally) use AT&T or T-Mobile instead of a low-cost carrier, this would be in the budget category. It's that much of a value. While the Galaxy Nexus is now strictly middling in terms of processing power, having the world's first Android 4.1 phone for this kind of off-contract price more than makes up for the difference. The new OS makes it exceptionally responsive, and Google Now will help you find out just how late you'll be to class if you miss the bus.

KEY SPECS: 1.2GHz dual-core TI OMAP 4460 CPU, 5MP rear / 1.3MP front cameras, 4.65-inch Super AMOLED HD display, stock Android 4.1.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...

BUY
\$150



HTC DROID INCREDIBLE 4G LTE

Some will decry the smaller screen, down-clocked 1.2GHz chip and the lack of burst photography versus the One S at T-Mobile — fair enough. But the lower price, better-quality display, Android 4.0, microSD slot and LTE make this the more tempting mid-range phone.



BUY
\$100

MOTOROLA ATRIX HD

Outside of the battery life, the Atrix HD is a great value for the money: it's mating a 4.5-inch, high-quality display with a fast 1.5GHz processor, all at half the contract price of similar-spec handsets. Motorola has also smartly scaled back the customization to let Android 4.0 shine brighter.



SMARTPHONES

High-End

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BUY
\$100



HTC ONE X

Now that it's just \$100 on a contract, the One X just edges out its Samsung rival as our pick for the top end. Yes, it sheds the removable battery and microSD slot — we know the impact. But the One X delivers a leaner interface, higher build quality and arguably the best display of any phone, all at half the up-front price of its peers. Performance (both in the 1.5GHz chip and LTE data) is top-notch, and the 8-megapixel camera enjoys both longer burst shots as well as a simpler, faster interface for capturing Frosh Week escapades.

KEY SPECS: 1.5GHz dual-core Snapdragon S4 CPU, 1GB RAM, 4.7-inch Super LCD 2 display, unibody design, 8MP rear / 1.3MP front cameras.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

SAMSUNG GALAXY S III

Don't worry, we still like what the Galaxy S III has to offer. A gigantic and beautiful 4.8-inch screen, a fast 1.5GHz processor with 2GB of RAM and all the removable expansion you'd like make it a go-to device.



BUY
\$200



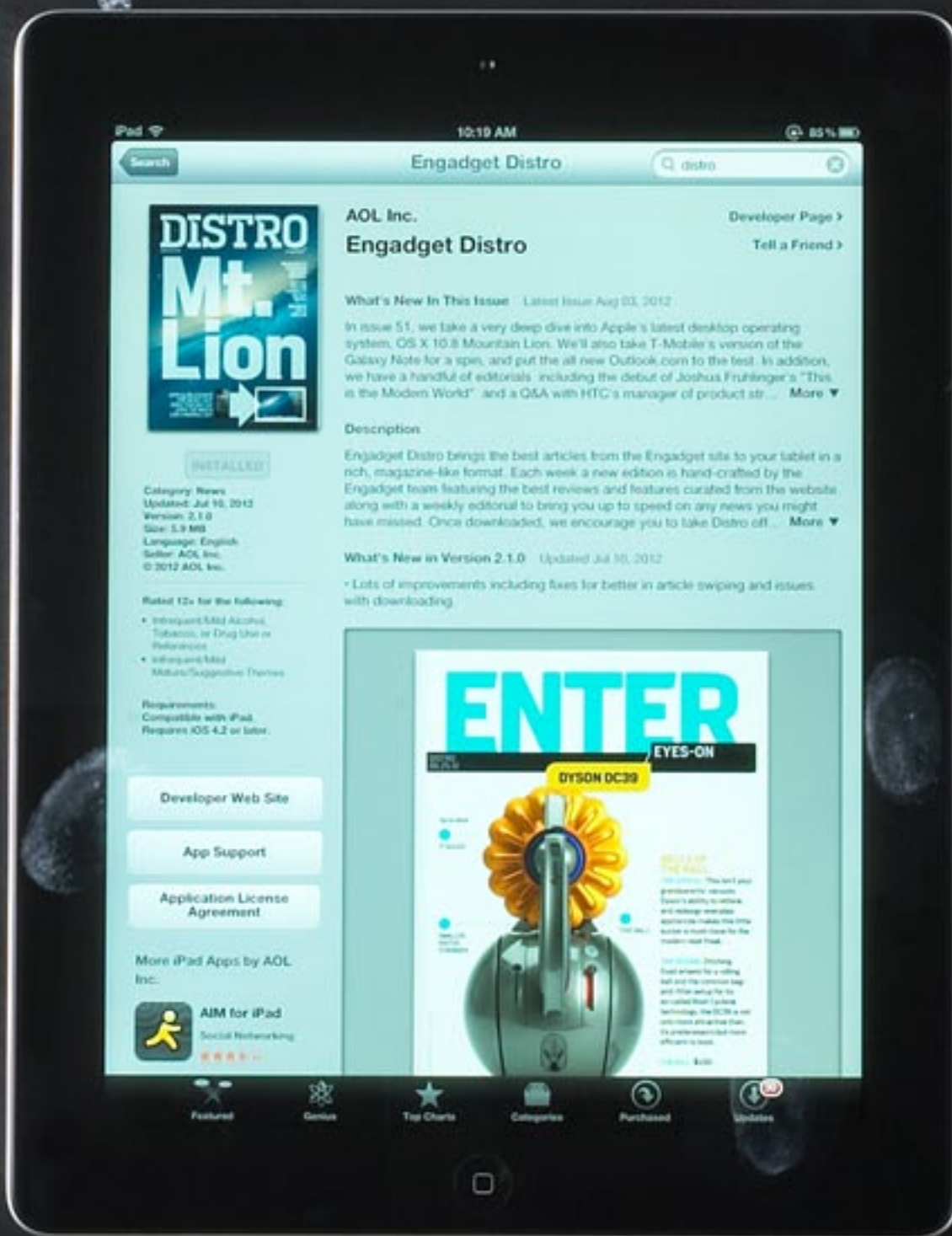
BUY
\$199

APPLE IPHONE 4S

While it's likely going to be replaced partway into the fall semester, the iPhone 4S is still a pleasing pick even several months into its lifecycle. Get over the small 3.5-inch screen; the 4S is surprisingly fast, and it has what's still considered the gold standard for 8-megapixel cameras.



TABLETS



As tablets grow more powerful (not to mention cheaper) they're fast becoming viable replacements for laptops on less intensive days. It may add just a bit more weight to your already over-stuffed messenger bag, but a solid slate will no doubt up your geek cred this semester.

By Daniel Cooper



TABLETS

On the Cheap

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BUY
\$199

GOOGLE NEXUS 7

If you're wedded to your Nook or Kindle Fire, sorry — Google and ASUS' tablet is putting both on the endangered list. Solid build quality, a comfortable form factor and Jelly Bean's refinements make this the best 7-inch Android device on the market. You'll be buying this for those moments after a long day at school, kicking back to read your textbook in front of the TV followed by some *Angry Birds* before bed. The rumors are that Google is selling this device at a loss, and that reason alone should convince you that you're getting a bargain, but the \$25 Play voucher's a good incentive, too.

KEY SPECS: Android Jelly Bean, \$199 price tag, Google Now.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...



BUY
\$248

SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB 2 7.0

Samsung's budget tablet combines decent battery life, good build quality and reasonable performance at a low price. It's also equipped with an infrared blaster that lets you change channels on the TV without reaching for the remote — great when you're riffing about what you're watching on Twitter.



BUY
\$199

AMAZON KINDLE FIRE

Last year's king of the budget hill is a portable window into Amazon's storefront. It's perfect for consuming any electronic content you can buy. Decent battery life, reasonable browsing and a low price mean it'll provide a good alternative if you don't fancy Google's latest slate.



TABLETS

Mid-Range

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BUY
\$380

ASUS TRANSFORMER PAD TF300

While ASUS' Transformer Pad TF300 is the budget version of its Transformer Prime, it hasn't made that many sacrifices. In fact, if you're on the market for something to take quick notes in class, then the TF300 should certainly be in your sights. The keyboard dock is an optional add-on, but gives you a physical input device that should get you through some short assignments without issues. Powerful internals and eight hours of battery life mean that it'll last you all day without any hassle and will be equally adept at handling the latest and greatest Android gaming titles for blowing out those stresses from the day.

KEY SPECS: Tegra 3, keyboard dock, great battery life.

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

APPLE IPAD 2

It screams volumes that last year's heavyweight can still match this year's units pound-for-pound, but that's the iPad all over. If you aren't worried about the souped-up camera or display, you can save yourself a heap of cash and plump for the budget model — it works just the same.



BUY
\$399

ACER ICONIA TAB A200

Acer wisely kept its Ice Cream Sandwich tinkering to a minimum, offering a solid slice of hardware that's neither shockingly quick or offensively slow. On the upside, the hardware feels like it could take a pounding; useful if it'll be fighting for space alongside your textbooks in your backpack.



BUY
\$250



APPLE IPAD (2012)

Yeah, it's still here. Let's face it — nobody does it better, and you're certainly not going to find a better device at the same price. If you have \$500 to spend on a device that'll work hard and play harder, then it has to be the iPad, no contest. The Retina display is simply amazing, the 5-megapixel camera *could* replace your point-and-shoot (we've

seen it happen already) and there's an unparalleled selection of educational apps to help you get through whatever class you're taking. Throw in Apple's content partnerships with the biggest textbook makers and you really don't have any excuse not to buy one.

KEY SPECS: Retina display, 5-megapixel camera, 42.5 watt-hour battery.



BUY
\$499

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...



TOSHIBA EXCITE 13

If you're looking for a tablet with more real estate than most, then Toshiba's Excite with a 13-inch display is for you. Of course, it weighs 2.2 pounds and you'll have to carry it with you to class, but that's a small price to pay, right?

BUY
\$650

ASUS TRANSFORMER PAD INFINITY

ASUS' new flagship demands more of your wallet, but if you want to get the best Transformer experience available, then

this is the device to snap up. A better camera, longer battery life and updated GPS support round out this device, likely to win the hearts of many.



BUY
\$499



ULTRA PORTABLES



Luxury machines like the MacBook Air and Samsung Series 9 ushered in the age of the Ultrabook, but as competition heats up, prices are cooling off. Whether you're living on Top Ramen and tap water, or kicking back with champagne and caviar this year, there's an ultraportable out there for you.

By Dana Wollman



ACER ASPIRE TIMELINE ULTRA M5

Even with so many Ultrabooks on the market, it's rare to find one with graphics good enough for more serious gaming. That's why we like the M5 notebooks, which can be configured with NVIDIA's new Kepler series GPUs. The M5 laptops, available with 14- and 15-inch screens, also have 0.81-inch-thick metal frames and narrow bezels — better build quality, perhaps, than you would have expected for \$650. Just keep in mind that for that entry-level price you'll be getting a last-generation Sandy Bridge processor; for an Ivy Bridge chip and discrete graphics, you'll need to pay at least \$780.

KEY SPECS: 1,366 x 768 resolution, 0.81 inches thick, 500GB hybrid hard drive, NVIDIA GeForce GT 640M LE graphics, 4.03 pounds / 5.07 pounds.



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

LENOVO IDEAPAD U310

How often do we chide Ultrabooks for having shallow keyboards or flaky trackpads? The U310 won us over with a smooth touchpad and a cushy set of keys, making it supremely comfortable to use. However, the lower price point means making do with shorter battery life and more middling performance.



SONY VAIO T13

Fair or not, Sony catches a lot of flak for selling overpriced gadgets that rest too much on the company's brand cachet. The T13, though, starts at a reasonable \$770. In our review, we praised the metal-clad design and found the performance to be fairly solid.



ULTRAPORTABLES

Mid-Range

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APPLE MACBOOK AIR 11"

When Apple refreshed its MacBook lineup recently, it didn't touch the industrial design. And that's a good thing: the Air continues to offer one of the most comfortable keyboard-and-trackpad combos. The chief difference is that both the 11- and 13-inch models pack Ivy Bridge chips, and feature Apple's slimmer MagSafe2 power connector. (You'll need an adapter if you want to use your older power brick.) In our tests, that new chipset provided a nice boost in performance, and the battery life is a bit longer, too. The Air remains our favorite all-around ultraportable, though competitors are starting to best it in categories like display quality and port selection.

KEY SPECS: 1,366 x 768 / 1,440 x 900 resolution (11-inch / 13-inch), 0.68 inches thick, 64GB to 256GB SSDs, 2.38 pounds / 2.96 pounds.

YOU
MIGHT
ALSO
LIKE...

BUY
\$1,000



HP ENVY SPECTRE XT

The XT is one of HP's highest-end Ultrabooks and it looks the part with its 0.57-inch-thick metal frame. As you'd expect, Ivy Bridge CPUs are standard, and you can configure it with up to 256GB of solid-state storage.



DELL XPS 14

The big brother to last year's XPS 13 ushers in some welcome improvements, including longer battery life, a refined trackpad, crisper 1,600 x 900 display and discrete NVIDIA graphics. The tradeoffs? A heavier-than-average build, relatively weak disk speeds and a bit of fan noise.



ULTRAPORTABLES

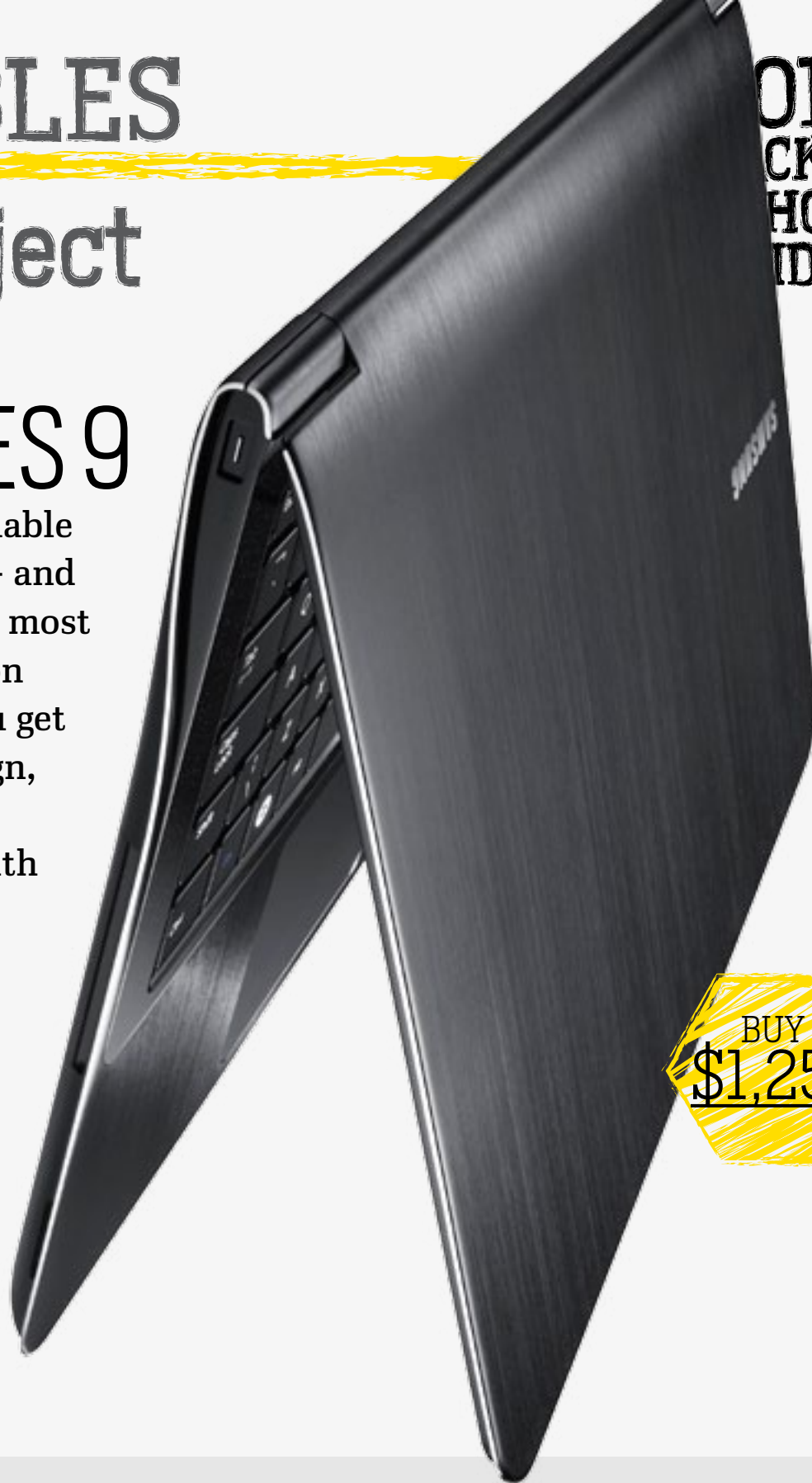
Money's No Object

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SAMSUNG SERIES 9

One of our favorite Ultrabooks available right now, the Series 9 comes in 13- and 15-inch versions, each thinner than most other ultraportables. Neither version comes cheap, but for the money you get a stunning unibody aluminum design, epic battery life, solid performance and a bright 1,600 x 900 display with a glare-free matte finish. So what's not to like? The flat keyboard, perhaps, which offers less travel than competing models. And while the trackpad has benefitted from some driver updates, it could still use some more fine-tuning.

KEY SPECS: 1,600 x 900 resolution, 0.5 / 0.58 inches thick, up to 256GB of storage, 2.55 pounds (13-inch) / 3.5 pounds (15-inch)



BUY
\$1,251

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...

HP ENVY 14 SPECTRE

Though it makes for a heavier design, the Spectre's metal-and-glass chassis is one of the most memorable we've seen. It's not all about looks, though: the Spectre also offers a high-res IPS display, comfortable keyboard and generous two-year warranty.

BUY
\$1,400



BUY
\$1,300

ASUS ZENBOOK PRIME UX32VD

We're fans of ASUS' entire line of Zenbook Prime Ultrabooks, thanks to their 1080p IPS displays, lovely build quality and much-improved keyboards. But we're especially intrigued by the 13-inch UX32VD, which adds a discrete NVIDIA GT 620M GPU for some extra graphics might.



ESC

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VISUALIZED

MARS ON EARTH



PHOTO BY NADAV NEUHAUS



The week that was
in 140 characters or less.

MORE FROM THE COURTROOM, INSTAGRAM ON A CAMERA AND MICROSOFT'S NEW LOGO

@darrenmurph

What if
you could
install
Instagram...
on your
camera?

@Gartenberg

From what I can tell those that speak with definitive certainty about the Apple/Samsung trial share a common trait of not being lawyers

@reckless

So far this case is Apple saying "just look at this shit" and Samsung countering "but let's look at it in exhaustive, painful detail."

@ryan

Logo design is a black art where even imperceptible details make an enormous impact. It strikes me that Microsoft's new logo has no details.

@kevinrose

I like the new Microsoft logo, that or the 1980-81' logo during Gates Metallica phase



THE STRIP

BY BOX BROWN



PASSING A NOTE



MODERN
EQUIVALENT:
SMS/Text
Messages

College is a waste
of TIME!
I don't care.
I'm just going
for the parties!



Not to be confused with Samsung's galactic phablet, this note is plain old pen and paper. Anyone who grew up before the smartphone knows the note was once the key to covert classroom conversations. These days, however, being discreet means pounding out a text message under your desk. Unfortunately, this technological advancement brings with it an increase in the cost of getting caught. What's a day in weekend detention compared to having your brand new iPhone confiscated?



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